RELIGION IN A FANTE TOWN OF SOUTHERN GHANA.

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Religion in a Fante town of Southern Ghana.

Abstract.

The thesis gives the result of 15 months' field research undertaken by the writer in the Fante town of Saltpond in Ghana, West Africa.

Part I poses two questions. Why have "modern", universalistic faiths like Christianity achieved their profound impact? But also, why do "traditional" belief and ritual continue to flourish alongside?

The chapter explains that answers will be sought by viewing the various beliefs in the light of relations between groups or individuals. This is considered preferable to the alternative "symbological" or "structuralist" approach.

Part II examines politicoeconomic organisation. Chapter 2 assesses the development of "class" stratification based upon differences of education, occupation and income. Chapter 3 considers kinship organisation, concluding (contrary to some previous writers) that descent is matrilineal, and that matriliny yetawhile retains significance. Chapter 4 discusses "traditional" political institutions, finding them still relevant to contemporary conditions.

Part III considers the "modern" religion of Christianity. Chapter 5 reviews its local history, and classifies the various churches into three types: Establishment, Fundamentalist, and African. Chapter 6 examines church congregations for differences in social composition, showing them to unite members of particular interest groups based on class, ethnic origin, or sex.

Part IV explores the contemporary importance of "traditional" religion. Chapter 7 describes the local deities, finding them still regarded as effective sources of benefits. Chapter 8 elucidates their continuing significance for local, "traditional", political organisation. Chapter 9 discusses causation of misfortune: witchcraft, most specifically,

is discussed in the light of conflict between matrilinearity and paternity. Chapter 10 shows the African churches as now rivalling local deities in counteracting witchcraft. These chapters together reveal an esoteric sphere wherein behaviour is inconsistent with professed belief.

Part V explains the vitality of Christianity and the continuance of "traditional" belief by reference to the various structural cleavages which they define and articulate. These findings are shown to bear implications for hypotheses connecting different structural conditions with the persistence of tradition and the emergence of class-based sub-cultures.

The thesis advances anthropological study in two respects. Firstly, it adds to the ethnography of an area now represented only relatively sparsely. Secondly, it contributes to the theory of religious symbolism, supporting the view that cosmological systems are integrated by a logic inherent in the social system.

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PART I. INTRODUCTORY.

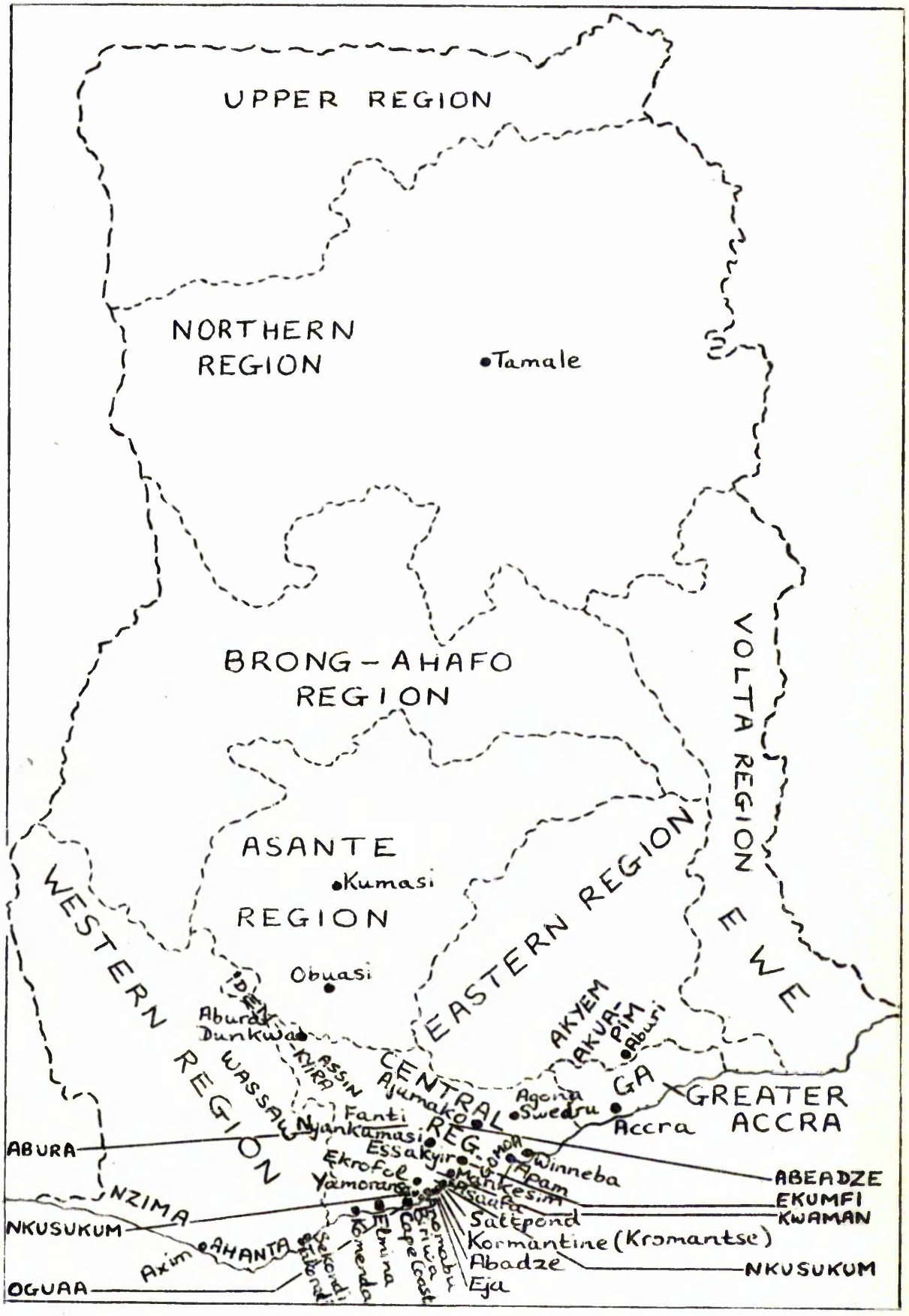

Fig.1.1. Map of Ghana.

Chapter 1. INTRODUCTION

1. The Problem. This study is concerned with changes in religious belief, practice and organisation in response to politicoeconomic change. It is based upon field research in a context within which "modern" and universalistic creeds - most notably, Christianity - operate alongside "traditional" cults of local reference.

In the following chapters, the initial task will be to elucidate the economic and political background of the community chosen for the research (see p. 16). This exposition will provide Part II of the work. Thereafter, Parts III and IV will assess the contemporary importance within that setting of the two types of belief contrasted above.

Underlying these discussions will be two specific problems. Firstly: why has Christianity achieved the impact which it will be shown to have done? And secondly: why, in the light of this success, should "traditional" ritual practice continue to the extent it does?

Fundamental to the ensuing dissertation is the view that cosmological systems are interconnected with relations between individuals and groups in the society in which they operate. This contrasts with an alternative line of enquiry taken by exponents of symbological schools such as the structuralists and anthropologists like V.W. Turner and Rodney Needham. Needham offers the generalisation that scholars of his persuasion:

> "agree in two basic analytical regards: that oppositions can validly be established, and that these can be systematically interrelated[1]."

Those working along these lines have accordingly tried to establish instances of so-called "complementary opposition" or "dual symbolic classification". The resulting comparison, in Needham's opinion:

> "creates the strong impression that human beings all over the world tend to order themselves and their environments in remarkably similar ways, and

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[1] Needham 1973:xviii.

> by implicit recourse to principles so general as to appear natural proclivities of the human mind[1]."

Research of this latter kind has been pursued recently within the ethnic group chosen for the present study. The investigator, Paul Breidenbach, directed his enquiry towards the ritual symbolism generated within a particular "African" church (c.f. pp. 29-30). This body is represented by branches in locations more or less throughout the area, including in the town which provides the setting for the following treatise. In his published discussions of belief and ritual in this organisation[2], Breidenbach draws attention to the significance of certain oppositions based upon contrasts of colour or spatial juxtaposition. Work along these lines can, as does that of Breidenbach himself, make a valuable contribution to understanding of the relationships between symbols bound into an overall cosmology. However, an exposition of this nature is insufficient, for it ignores an additional profoundly relevant dimension. Indeed, work of this kind is especially prone to the danger which constantly besets anthropology, that of degeneration into no more than increasingly meticulous description.

This shortcoming, it is hoped, will be avoided in the dissertation which follows. As the opening paragraphs of this chapter indicate, the concern here is with a quite different set of problems, problems which could not in fact be dealt with at all by members of the "structuralist" school. An attempt will be made below to explain the rise or disintegration of religious belief by reference to the changing socioeconomic and political background. This is an endeavour which has some illustrious past practitioners, such as Fustel de Coulanges[3] and (in contradiction to Max Weber[4]) R.H. Tawney[5].

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[1] Needham 1973:xxxiii.
[2] Breidenbach 1975 :92-110;1976:137-145. He has made his results available in greater detail in his doctoral thesis, Breidenbach 1973.
[3] de Coulanges 1873.
[4] Weber 1930.
[5] Tawney 1926.

Before moving on to describe the field location itself, there are certain questions of basic terminology which should be clarified. Firstly, it should be said that the term "religion" will be used here in the sense of the minimum definition of E.B. Taylor as re-formulated by, among others, Jack Goody[1]. The term "ritual" denotes standardised behaviour which, addressed to entities of the above character, bears a religious connotation. Standardised behaviour not so directed is described as "ceremony". This latter distinction diverges from Goody's usage, and instead follows that of Monica Wilson which he rejects[2].

The term "political" will be taken below to concern the allocation of power. Although a conceptual link is recognised between this and the "economic", concerning the allocation of resources, the latter will always be specified as such. This understanding of the terms is not unusual, but it contrasts with some recent usage[3].

A final matter of definition revolves around the distinction made at the beginning of this chapter between the concepts "traditional" and "modern". These terms describe contrasting characteristics, together implying a dichotomy upon which much of the argument below is built. Nevertheless, it has to be allowed that the terms themselves are unsatisfactory. In everyday speech, the opposite of the "traditional", or that which is handed down from generation to generation, is usually taken to be whatever pertains to the present time and is recent or new. This is the generally understood meaning of the term "modern". It has the drawback, however, that it views its subject with a shifting focus, for things which are modern today will not on the above basis be modern tomorrow, even though they themselves remain unchanged.

Another disadvantage of the term "modern", as generally understood and as defined above, is that it can carry two connotations which are not

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[1] Goody 1961a:144,157.
[2] Goody 1961a: 159; Wilson 1957:9.
[3] e.g. Cohen 1969a:217; 1974:22-23.

strictly identical. More specifically, everything which belongs to the present is not necessarily new. A simple solution to this difficulty will be made here by avoiding use of the term "modern" in the sense of "present-day". In its place, the less ambiguous term "contemporary" will be employed. This will explicitly refer to any social conditions ruling at the time of the research, that is, in the early 1970s.

The term "modern" will be used here expressly in the sense of "new", but even this usage demands further clarification. The concept "new" is, as already pointed out, one which is relative. Therefore, it need not be inconsistent with its application that some of the social institutions to be described below as "modern" should have been evident in the area in question for several centuries. "Modern", in the following work, is used with reference not to any particular standpoint in time, but to a certain contrasting form of social organisation which is regarded as "traditional". This "traditional" form of social organisation is taken to be that which, it is assumed, held sway in a pure state among the Fante people, with whom this study deals, before they came to be affected by changes resulting from European contact. In actuality, this whole assumption is artificial, because, as a following passage will indicate (pp.19-20), there was little or no time during which the Fante, since their first arrival at their present home, were not subject to influences from overseas. Nor, if there had been, could the pattern of their social organisation at that date now be determined accurately. Nevertheless, the assumption is made for the sake of convenience. Furthermore, features of contemporary social organisation which would seem to have been retained from this posited "traditional" pattern are likewise described as "traditional". The contrasting "modern" social institutions are taken as those which have arisen after, and largely as a result of, overseas contact. These include the cash economy, Western-style education, new principles of social stratification, and new forms of religion. This

distinction of the "traditional" and "modern" clearly implies acknowledgement at some level of two opposing types of society, but the following study is not primarily concerned with questions of such broad sweep. It concentrates rather upon a single facet of the subject, and the distinction between "traditional" and "modern" is employed essentially as an analytical tool. These terms are used, for all their drawbacks, because none better have been found available. However, in recognition of the fictitiousness of their meaning, they will always be placed within quotation marks.

No further questions of terminology need be discussed at this stage, although further problems of more limited reference will be dealt with in the subsequent text.

2. Field Situation. The research on which this study is based took place between December 1972 and December 1973 in the town of Saltpond, which is situated upon the coast in the Central Region of Ghana. Saltpond lies along the main road from Accra, some 70 miles westward, to the regional capital, Cape Coast, nearly 20 miles eastward. Its population was enumerated in 1970 at 11,849[1].

This is relatively large for a settlement in Ghana, excluding the major cities. A town of this size was selected deliberately, for a setting was required in which a significant degree of social and economic change might be expected. Small, isolated villages were therefore regarded as unsuitable. Saltpond, on the other hand, gave evidence upon preliminary investigation of not inconsiderable development. It had been shown by Grove and Huszar, in their survey of Ghanaian "service centres" based on data from the 1960 census[2], to perform important administrative and social welfare functions. Moreover, it apparently supported economic activity of an industrial, if infant, type. Grove and Huszar ranked it as a "Grade III" town upon a scale from I to V.[3]. This background was

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[1] Census of Ghana 1970: vol. II, 112.
[2] Grove & Huszar 1964: Table 1, inset back cover.
[3] ibid: 26-28.

judged to be particularly promising for the kind of study which was intended. Only later was it learnt that a decline in the fortunes of the town, merely hinted at by Grove and Huszar[1], had been seriously undermining the level of economic activity for several decades. Saltpond was in fact no longer quite the thriving community it once had been. Nevertheless, the economic and social change to which it had long been subject was continuing, if not at a uniformly rapid rate (see Chap. 2, pp. 38-39). Thus the initial premise remained valid.

Saltpond is located within the area occupied by a people referred to as the Fante or Mfantse. These speak their own version of the Akan language, which is widely used in Southern Ghana, and they hold much of their culture in common with the peoples who speak related Akan dialects. Among these, one group which have become particularly well-known, by virtue of their place in history as well as in anthropological literature, are the Ashanti or Asante, who inhabit lands some way northwards in the interior of the country. The Ashanti show a common feature of Akan culture in the emphasis which they accord to the matrilineal line of descent. It will be contended later (Chap. 3, pp. 90-94) that this characteristic is shared by the people of Saltpond, if to a lesser degree. However, it should be noted that an earlier student of the Fante people, J.B. Christensen, has disputed this view, arguing that the Fante are better classified as exhibiting a system of "double descent"[2].

The political organisation of the Fante never approached the cohesiveness achieved by the Asante, who united themselves into a single political unit with a relatively high degree of centralisation[3]. The Fante consisted always of a number of independent states, linked by only ritual ties (see Chap. 5, pp.135-136). Attempts in the 19th century to develop more effective bonds of a political nature met with no success.

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[1] Grove and Huszar 1964:37.
[2] Christensen 1954a:4-5.
[3] Christensen 1954a:12; Rattray 1923:288-290; 1929:72-106; Wilks 1967:206-239.

Oral traditions regarding the early history of the Fante have been recorded by Christensen, who has also charted the geographical location of the various contemporary Fante states[1]. Neither of these tasks will therefore be pursued here in detail. It is sufficient to note that tradition relates how the ancestors of the present Fante people once migrated southwards from a former home at Tekyiman in the north of Ghana. They then apparently established themselves in a new settlement at the town of Mankesim, some 7 miles from the coast directly inland from present-day Saltpond. Christensen dates the migration itself at approximately 1300, and the foundation of Mankesim some 50 to 100 years after. Later, it is said, sections of the populace dispersed from Mankesim to found the different Fante states. Nowadays, according to Christensen, a number of adjacent peoples in the Central Region are often also regarded as Fante, but this, he asserts, is not strictly true[2].

Saltpond is today the largest of the strictly Fante towns apart from the now very cosmopolitan Cape Coast. Although only 7 miles from Mankesim, which is still the seat of one of the Fante Paramount Chiefs, the town has never owed allegiance there. Nor has it been subject to the State of Anomabu, whose capital - likewise by name Anomabu - is equally nearby. Instead, Saltpond forms part of the State of Nkusukum, though separated by Anomabu lands from its own capital of Yamoransa, 15 miles westward along the Cape Coast road.

Saltpond itself should really be regarded not as one community, but two. Although spatially conjoined, in political terms they comprise two entirely distinct towns, each internally autonomous under its own Chief. Both Chiefs owe their allegiance to the Paramount of Nkusukum. (The precise nature of the relationship of the two communities to Nkusukum State will be discussed later; see Chap. 4, pp.100-102). According to local tradition, the original settlement was that of Nankesedo, commonly

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[1] Christensen 1954a:7-11;14-15.
[2] ibid:8.

referred to as Lower Saltpond or Low Town (see map, Fig. 2.1, p. 37). It is said to have been founded by a hunter from a village on the way to Mankesim, who supposedly followed in the footsteps of a wounded elephant and remained upon the spot on the eastern bank of the Atufa Lagoon where the creature finally expired. The economy of the original village apparently centred largely around fishing, which remains of importance today. It seems also, though, that for a long time salt was manufactured around the banks of the lagoon and traded with peoples of the interior. Thus arose the town's European name.

The second settlement is relatively more recent in origin. This is Akyemfo, otherwise Upper Saltpond or Upper Town (see Fig. 2.1, p. 37). Precise dates are difficult to determine, but it was perhaps founded not very much earlier than the beginning of the 19th century. It is sometimes described as situated on the west bank of the lagoon. More correctly, though, it extends back from the coast for more than a mile, not only from its own part of the beach, but behind the Low Town settlement as well. The original settlers of Upper Saltpond apparently arrived to take advantage of opportunities in the maritime trade with Europe, and the Upper Town stretch of the shore once served as an anchorage for European vessels. Nowadays, Upper Town is approximately four times the size of Low Town both in area and population, and the greater part of the commercial and industrial development of Saltpond has taken place there. Most of the present fieldwork, too, was conducted in Upper Saltpond, which therefore provides the principal subject of the following work.

3. Historical Background. The arrival of the Fante upon the coast is dated by most authorities at approximately 1400[1]. In these early days, they apparently occupied a relatively small area eastwards of Cape Coast, and their coastal settlements were no more than small villages whose

[1] Ward 1948:57; Christensen 1954a:7.

occupants were engaged in fishing and the manufacture of salt. The capitals of the Fante states were located inland[1].

Not long after the arrival of the Fante, the Portuguese, the first of the European nations to appear on the coast, made landing near Elmina, 10 miles west of Cape Coast. This was in 1471[2]. Within a few years, they had established a permanent settlement at Elmina from where they traded for the gold which originated from regions in the interior, then under the control of Denkyera[3]. It is salutary to reflect that the life of the Fante people upon the coast can have remained untouched by influences from Europe for only a very brief period[4].

The following centuries saw the rapid expansion of the coastal trade and the intervention of new European trading powers. To provide themselves with protected positions from which to carry on their business, the traders built the imposing forts or "castles" so characteristic of this section of the Ghanaian coast, many of which may still be seen today[5]. The first British fort was built in 1631 at Kormantine (more properly Krɔmantse), no more than a mile from contemporary Saltpond. The Portuguese, who in the 1500s had established a number of new settlements at points along the Gold Coast outside the Fante area, were finally expelled altogether when, in 1637, the Dutch captured Elmina. Subsequently the Dutch established settlements at Cape Coast, Anomabu, Kormantine and Accra. Moreover, after 1662 the British traded from Cape Coast, Anomabu and Egya as well as from Kormantine, although in 1665 they were displaced by the Dutch from all but the former. In 1673, the British, like the Dutch, established themselves at Accra. Other nations too were coming to be represented in the Gold Coast trade. The history of the relations between the European powers during the period 1600-1800 is most complex,

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[1] Claridge 1915, vol.1:56.
[2] Ellis 1893:17; Claridge 1915, vol.1:33; Ward 1948:60.
[3] Ellis 1893:18-20; Claridge 1915, vol.1:43-44; Ward 1948:60-64,113; Fynn 1971:21-22.
[4] c.f. Ward 1948:52.
[5] c.f. Ward 1948: Appendix 1,pp.363-368; also Van Dantzig & Priddy 1971.

concerning as it does repeated skirmishes for possession of the various forts. It has however little relevance to the present study, and has been amply documented elsewhere[1]. The stimulus to this intense, and at times violent, competition lay in the enormous profits to be realised in the Atlantic slave-trade, which was by now superseding the gold trade in importance. The slave-trade came to its height in the 1700s[2].

By 1700, the Fante coastal settlements had developed as trading towns of a significant size. Some had become the capitals of their own states[3]. Traders from the Fante towns, and their counterparts in Accra, came to play the role of middle-men in the slave-trade between the Europeans on the coast and the suppliers of slaves from the interior[4]. During the 1700s, Fante culture achieved supremacy along the coast from the borders with Efutu country at Beraku in the east, to the boundary of Elmina in the west[5]. This same period, opening with the defeat of Denkyera by Asante in 1701, also saw the rise and consolidation of the Asante Empire inland[6]. Both these developments are said to have occurred in response to the growing opportunities in the slave-trade[7].

Writers on this period disagree over the extent to which the Europeans in the coastal settlements played a part in local politics. Some have it that the traders living in the forts were concerned only to manage their own affairs, maintaining a policy of neutrality towards the surrounding peoples[8]. Other writers allege that they made their influence felt outside the settlements from the very start[9]. The truth, probably, is that at first their effective power was strictly limited. But the early years of the

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[1] Ellis 1893:Chap.2-11; Claridge 1915, vol.1:Chaps.3-9,12;
[2] Van Dantzig & Priddy 1971:Chap.1-2.
[2] Ellis 1893:93-97; Claridge 1915, vol.1:172-175; Ward 1948:80-81.
[3] Van Dantzig & Priddy 1971:34-35,37.
[4] Claridge 1915, vol.1:155; Fynn 1971:24.
[5] Claridge 1915, vol.1:173; Ward 1948:82; Fynn 1971:24.
[6] Claridge 1915, vol.1:229.
[6] Ellis 1893:83-90,99-106; Claridge 1915, vol.1:181, 192-197, 209-210, 228-229;
[7] Ward 1948:107-119, 130-135; Fynn 1971:Chap. 2-5.
[8] Ward 1948:136.
[9] e.g. Ellis 1893:134; Claridge 1915, vol.1:229.
[9] Daaku 1970:74-79, 91-94.

19th century, noteworthy for successive Asante-Fante wars, saw an increasing involvement of the British in support of the peoples in the vicinity of their settlements[1]. During this same period - specifically in 1807 - the U.K. government legislated for the abolition of the slave-trade, but shipments of slave cargoes continued to be made, sometimes within sight of British forts[2]. In 1821, therefore, the former arrangement entitling the last in a line of trading companies to administer the forts was ended. The company was abolished, and its assets taken over by the Crown. The settlements were then placed under the authority of the not long existent Colony of Sierra Leone[3].

Crown administration of the settlements was not maintained from then on without interruption, but nevertheless the jurisdiction of the British authorities was gradually extended beyond the forts themselves. The British governors based at Cape Coast set up criminal courts in which British law was applied to residents of the townships surrounding the forts. Outlying chiefs, too, not uncommonly attended the court seeking arbitration to their own disputes[4]. This jurisdiction was finally legalised in the famous "Bond of 1844", contracted between the administration and the Fante chiefs[5]. Subsequently, in 1852, these latter, followed by the Ga chiefs of the Accra area, accepted the Poll Tax Ordinance which (though abortive in its primary aim) defined the right of the local people to British protection, a claim which had been tacitly accepted for some years previously[6].

These same years saw the first effective introduction of Christianity to the Gold Coast. In 1835, the first of the Wesleyan Methodist missionaries arrived at Cape Coast with the intention of carrying his work to the local

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[1] [2] Ellis 1893:Chap.10-11; Claridge 1915, vol.1:esp. p.279.
[3] Ellis 1893:135-136; Claridge 1915, vol.1:255-257, 280-283.
[4] Ellis 1893:145-146; Claridge 1915, vol.1:331-332; Ward 1948:167-168.
[5] Claridge 1915, vol.1:415-416; Ward 1948:184-186.
[6] Claridge 1915, vol.1:453; Ward 1948:187-188.
Claridge 1915, vol.1:478-481; Ward 1948:189-191.

people[1]. In 1835, too, representatives of the Basel Mission, a Swiss organisation, established themselves in Akropong in the Eastern region, from where they disseminated their own Presbyterian teachings[2]. The rapid spread of Christianity across the Fante area over the following decades will be mentioned later (Chap. 5, pp.133-137).

In 1872, the British finally bought out the Dutch from their possessions along the Gold Coast[3]. By this date, influential sections in the U.K., reflecting upon the continuing and increasingly troublesome series of Asante Wars, were reaching the conclusion that there could be no viable middle path between total abandonment of the Gold Coast and outright annexation[4]. It seems to have been largely for this reason that the incipient Fante Confederation - established as a military alliance of Fante states in 1868 and extended in 1871 as a scheme for self-government under British suzerainty - was allowed to die for lack of official support[5]. In 1874 the U.K. government assumed complete rights of jurisdiction over the Gold Coast by its own arbitrary act, creating it together with Lagos as a Colony separate from Sierra Leone[6]. Asante was annexed in 1902, one year after its final military defeat[7]. At the same time, the territories north of Asante were declared a Protectorate[8].

After the creation of the Colony in 1874, the British reorganised their system of administration and, accordingly, they in 1877 moved their administrative headquarters out of Cape Coast to Accra[9]. During most of the period since then, various schemes of regional government have been in force, and these have always allowed to Cape Coast the position of capital

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[1] Bartels 1965:12.
[2] Smith 1966:30-31.
[3] Ellis 1893:243-247,267,275; Claridge 1915, vol.1:559-560,563,613,626; Ward 1948:231-232,239-243.
[4] Ward 1948:255.
[5] Claridge 1915, vol.I:567,614-615,617-625; Ward 1948:232-233,246-252,255-260; Kimble 1963:222-262. See also below, Chap.4, pp.99-100.
[6] Claridge 1915, vol.II:172; Ward 1948:257-258; Kimble 1963:302-306.
[7] Ward 1948:315-325; Kimble 1963:315-325.
[8] Ward 1948:307-308,314-315; Kimble 1963:323-325.
[9] Dickson 1969:255-259.

of whatever area - be it termed province or region - the town was included within. This status it still enjoys today. Saltpond became, under legislation of 1876, the headquarters of one of the newly-introduced District Commissioners[1]. It has remained the administrative centre of its District despite the many boundary changes which have taken place during the periods of colonial rule and, since 1960, independence.

4. Relevant Literature. There is an extensive body of literature regarding the Akan peoples, covering many aspects of their history, their social organisation and their religion. Much of it has relevance of a kind for the present study, but not all is of sufficient quality to be truly helpful. The following review makes a brief mention of works which have been particularly useful, either as sources of background information on the Fante or for purposes of comparison. Most of these are cited repeatedly in subsequent chapters.

The numerous political histories of Ghana can contribute nothing to the present study over and above the short factual account which made up the preceding section. They will therefore receive no special attention here. The remaining works are categorised below as either ethnographies of general application, or as studies of religion. The latter are classified further according to their approach, whether historical, theological, or ethnographic.

(a) Ethnographies. The only ethnographic monograph yet published specifically on the Fante peoples is J.B. Christensen's Double descent among the Fante of 1954. Although the form of its publication under the auspices of the New Haven Human Relations Area Files renders this at times difficult to use, it clearly embodies the results of some conscientious field research. Today, a generation or so after its first appearance, it might be judged to lack theoretical orientation, but nevertheless, the information it contains can offer some interesting comparisons

[1] Kimble 1963:304-305, and 305 n.5.

across the Fante area. Its helpfulness in this respect, though, is hampered by the writer's habit of referring to the Fante in general rather than restricting his comments to one or other of his several field locations. This book can also suggest comparisons of another kind, across time, for the author directed much of his attention towards informants' recollections of customs which were at the time of writing falling into disuse. However, inferences formed on the strength of data of this kind must be viewed with considerable caution. Really meaningful comparisons can perhaps only be built from Christensen's reports of the contemporary situation in the early 1950s.

A second source specifically concerned with the Fante is M. Priestley's West African trade and coast society of 1969. This study, not in fact an ethnography but a social history, deals with social changes generated by the overseas trade from the 18th centry onwards. It focuses on the patronymic Brew "family" of the coastal town of Anomabu, a grouping which it regards as exemplifying the supposedly newly-emerging patrilineal corporate kin group. As a detailed study of the changes taking place in the area over time, the work is of real interest, and for the purpose here it provides useful confirmation of the connection between the introduction of new forms of education, occupation and religion. However, its conclusions (as summarised above) which touch upon the field of social anthropology are marred by limited knowledge of anthropological theory (c.f. below, Chap. 3, p. 94).

Among the literature on other Akan peoples, the work of R.S. Rattray on Asante (Ashanti, 1923; Religion and art in Ashanti, 1927; Ashanti law and constitution, 1929) must take a leading place. Rattray, the first anthropologist of any substance to work in Ghana, effectively inspired the school of Akan ethnography. His work, naturally enough, lacks the benefit of later conceptual and theoretical clarifications, but is so wide-ranging and discerning that no student of the Akan even today can

afford to ignore it. Those who are more concerned with other Akan peoples, however, must avoid any temptation to apply Rattray's generalisations without foundation to all Akan groups.

This comment, of course, applies to all other studies of Akan outside the Fante area. Of these, comprehensive monographs are few in number and rarely of recent publication. The most useful, at least for the present research, is undoubtedly K.A. Busia's The position of the Chief in the modern political system of Ashanti, 1951, which examines its subject specifically in the context of broader socioeconomic change. To a lesser extent, M.J. Field's work on Akyem (Akim-Kotoku: an oman of the Gold Coast, 1948) suggests some interesting parallels and contrasts. So, too, do some relatively short publications of Meyer Fortes[1]. Polly Hill's excellent study of Akwapim cocoa-farmers[2] scarcely touches upon the subjects to be covered here, and thus provides little help.

(b) Studies of religion. (i) Theological. Of the work on religion among Akan peoples, a sizeable body of writing has now emerged which may be described as theological in orientation. It has been compiled by church leaders and professional theologians, and also in part by educated Ghanaians committed to one or other of the churches. These writers have looked at "traditional" religion in order to assess its compatibility with Christian doctrine. One major preoccupation - especially of Ghanaian writers such as J.B. Danquah in The Akan doctrine of God, 1944 - has been to lay emphasis upon the importance of the Supreme Being within the "traditional" cosmology. Other authors (e.g. R.T. Parsons, The churches and Ghana society, 1963; S.G. Williamson, Akan religion and the Christian faith, 1967; contributors to Religion in a Pluralistic Society, ed. J.S. Pobee, 1976) have examined a far wider reach of social and religious life. Their aim has been to consider which indigenous customs might be accepted into an enriched African version of Christianity, and which other practices must be excluded.

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[1] Fortes 1949:54-85; 1950:252-284.
[2] Hill 1963.

For the most part, this school of writing offers little help towards a sociological study of the same subject. The work is by its very nature value-laden, and generally it ignores the social context in which the beliefs arise. Even in the initial delineation of its subject-matter, it is too generalised to be of service, for, as ethnographic studies of Akan religion are showing, there are significant differences of emphasis in the cosmological systems of the various Akan peoples, and these need be taken into account.

An alternative line of enquiry taken by certain writers of similar background has been to study the doctrine and development of a particular church or churches. Sources of this kind have been found to be more helpful than those mentioned above in providing background information. They have, however, been of use largely for the sake of the historical data they contain; some, indeed, are predominantly histories, in spite of the fact that the sympathies of their writers are not infrequently made evident. They are therefore dealt with in the following section.

(b) Studies of Religion. (ii) Historical. The historical studies of Akan religion have concentrated particularly upon the introduction of Christian churches and their later development. This body of literature has only limited applicability to a sociological treatment of religion, but can none the less help to add a valuable diachronic dimension to understanding of the subject. It has made a significant contribution to the present study, particularly to Chapter 5, where the growth of Christianity is described primarily in the local context of Saltpond itself.

The most helpful publication for these purposes has been F.L. Bartels' The roots of Ghana Methodism, 1965. This is a thorough study of the introduction of a church which arrived first in the Fante part of Ghana and has ever since remained influential in the area. J.N. Smith's comparable The history of the Presbyterian church in Ghana, 1967, has

less relevance, this church having never acquired any strong representation among the Fante. More usefully, some pertinent information regarding a number of different churches can be found in H.W. Debrunner's A history of Christianity in Ghana, 1967, although this is a work characterised by its superficiality. A more recent study of The prophet Harris, by G.M. Haliburton, 1971, provides interesting material upon the very early stages of one of the indigenous or "African" churches, and further information concerning their development is available in C.G. Baeta's Prophetism in Ghana, 1962. Finally, it should be noted that H.J. Fisher's Ahmadiyya: a study in contemporary Islam on the West African coast, 1963, contains a section on the growth in Ghana of an Islamic order which, from its first days in the country, has won much of its following from among the Fante. The subject of Islam, however, is deliberately excluded from the present study (see below, p.31).

(b) Studies of Religion. (iii) Ethnographic. The classic ethnographic studies of Akan religion are of course those of R.S. Rattray, which have already been cited. His work throws light on the importance in Asante of the ritual surrounding matrilineal descent for political organisation and chiefship. Much of his material, however, is presented in such a manner that further analysis is virtually impossible. K.A. Busia's short treatment of similar subject-matter[1] is more systematic. Nevertheless, the Asante and Fante are so divergent in their ritual and, to a degree, in their belief, that the problem of comparability becomes particularly cogent in this sphere.

Another facet of religion in Asante which has provoked discussion among anthropologists is the importance of witch-beliefs in explaining misfortune, and the associated emergence of anti-witchcraft cults. These appear to have achieved their fullest development in the late 1940s and

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[1] Busia 1954:190-209. A chapter in his monograph is also devoted to this topic; see Busia 1951:23-39.

early 1950s. The resulting questions, which have been considered, by writers such as Barbara E. Ward[1] and Jack Goody[2], have more direct relevance to the case of the Fante. Similar problems enter into M.J. Field's full-length study of 1960, Search for security, but although the extensive case studies included within are illuminating, the grounding of the work in psychiatric theory renders it of little use for comparative sociological analysis. A sociological study which has appeared more recently is W. Bleek's Marriage, inheritance and witchcraft, 1975; this deals with a matrilineal group among the Kwahu people of the Eastern Region.

On the Fante as such, J.B. Christensen has himself produced, in addition to the relevant passages of his monograph, two short treatments of religion. One of these is concerned with this same phenomenon of the rise of anti-witchcraft cults[3], and the other with the role of the "traditional" priesthood[4]. The latter rarely rises above description, but includes a fairly useful discussion of the effect of the introduction of Christianity, and of other briefly mentioned changing social conditions, upon "traditional" religion in the area. From other writers[5], there have appeared more recently some short assessments of the role of the military asafo companies, Fante men's groups for which ritual figures prominently among the various activities. However, the authors, although adding a valuable measure of objectivity to the understanding of these organisations, largely ignore their ritual aspects. A different kind of treatment altogether on the subject of religion among the Fante is provided by the aforementioned work of Paul Breidenbach[6]. Breidenbach has focused his work not upon religion of a "traditional" character, but rather on to one of the newly-developing indigenous manifestations of Christianity. On the basis of this research, he has produced a considered study of the belief

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[1] Ward 1956:47-60.
[2] Goody 1957:356-362; 1975:91-106.
[3] Christensen 1954b:389-398.
[4] Christensen 1959:257-278.
[5] Datta & Porter 1971:279-297; Datta 1972:305-314.
[6] Breidenbach 1975:92-110; 1976:137-145.

system of the Twelve Apostles' Church - one of the most successful of the "African" churches in the Fante area -, interpreting his material in accordance with the "structuralist" approach of V.W. Turner. The results are of interest, but, as affirmed above (p.13), it is considered here that such studies omit an important dimension of sociological understanding.

There is in existence, therefore, no wholly satisfactory treatment of religion among the Fante. Even in its purely "traditional" form, it has not received the attention it might have won from exponents of the once popular "functionalist" school of anthropology. Consequently, there has appeared no study which deals with the broad range of belief or which adequately elucidates any connections this may have with other social institutions. Religion in its contemporary form among the Fante has been dealt with only piecemeal, and never with the explicit theoretical orientation of the present work. This study, it is hoped, will answer a real deficiency.

5. Outline of the Argument. The following analysis takes both "traditional" and "modern" forms of belief to be parts of the same system. This approach, not unlike that of S.F. Nadel in his Nupe Religion, 1954, contrasts with some recent work in which the investigators have confined their enquiry to a more limited field, perhaps to one particular cult or church. Intensive research of this kind within a severely restricted framework produces results which, in their depth and detail, the present study cannot hope to match. On the other hand, the particular ritual groups discussed in the following pages are dealt with in a manner which readily brings out their relationship to each other, noting the movement of individuals between them and the place of the groups themselves in the wider social organisation. The present work is intentionally not so much a study of belief and ritual in the groups specifically mentioned. It is rather an elucidation of the pattern of religious belief and organisation of a particular, increasingly heterogeneous, community.

The heterogeneous character of Saltpond will be indicated in Chapter 2, which looks into the economic and social traits of the local population. Heterogeneity is, however, only to be expected of a town deliberately selected for the sake of its evident degree of development. And this, in itself, poses particular problems for an overall study of the religion of that same community, since religious belief may be expected to be correspondingly diversified. Such was indeed the case in Saltpond, where the total range of belief was so extensive that it could not be covered in any meaningful way by a single investigator restricted by time. Certain limitations, therefore, had of necessity to be imposed.

Accordingly, since there were two "modern" and universalistic creeds - Christianity and Islam - extant in the town, it appeared sensible to restrict the field of study to just one. The more important of the two, in terms both of numerical representation and of general influence, was Christianity. It was therefore decided to exclude Islam from special study, even though the incidence of this latter faith in Fante towns is of particular interest. The splinter movement known as Ahmadiyya, which originates from Pakistan, has long had a substantial following among the Fante. (For the moment, in fact, it maintains its national headquarters in Saltpond itself.) These Fante Moslems may be contrasted with the in-migrant northerners, the inhabitants of the zongos, who hold to the orthodox version of the faith. This situation undoubtedly deserves detailed research in its own right. However, the subject of Islam will receive no further treatment here, except in so far as it need be mentioned below to set other comments in their context.

Simplification of the field also proved necessary within the "traditional" realm of belief. 'Traditional' Fante belief is many-stranded, encompassing a Supreme Being, the great deities of the Earth and Sea, a multiplicity of nature-gods or locality spirits, ancestral spirits,

and other spirits supposedly responsible for the phenomenon of witchcraft (see Chap. 7, pp.211-212). Of these, it is primarily the nature-gods (abosom) which have come to be regarded as offering the antithesis to Christianity. A person is either a Christian or a pagan, according to whether he gives his allegiance to the one God above or to the many gods below. (Qualifications to this statement are made in Chap. 7, pp.220-224.) This dichotomy provides a most convenient basis for discussion. It also constitutes a framework against which certain other features of the cosmology may be assessed. For instance, the importance of the Supreme Being within the two contexts may be compared. Likewise, it is possible on this same basis to consider the question of witchcraft, to which these "traditional" and "modern" forms of belief suggest alternative solutions (see Chap. 10, pp.311-316).

The ancestral cults, however, stand somewhat apart from the above sphere of action, for they do not in anything like the same sense act as directly alternative to the "modern" religious organisations. Whether pagan or Christian, the Fante inhabitants of Saltpond, effectively to a man, retain a belief in the power of the ancestral spirits which underpin their system of matrilineal organisation, and in the readiness of these spirits to intervene in the lives of their living descendants. Libations to ancestors are poured, during festival periods and on special occasion or need, as a matter of course in the households of the most dedicated of Christians by the church-goers themselves. The only objection to such practice heard during the research was voiced as an aside to the investigator by a Christian minister. In some households, informants maintain, a regular libation is still poured daily, but this, if true, would seem to apply only in those few instances where a wholly pagan orientation has been maintained. On the other hand, the annual rites for previous holders of the maximal matrilineage Stools (see Chap. 3, pp. 77-80) are still apparently observed in all their essentials (Chap. 8, pp.242-243).

The present-day Stool-Holders, who like their predecessors must take a central part in a ritual involving the slaughter of a sheep to the Stool and the offering of libations, are now almost inevitably Christians. One such man, Nana Nyimpa (Chap. 6, Case 4, p.173), justified his own participation in the ancestral rites of his matrilineage (ebusua; pl: mbusua) as follows:-

> "There are no other gods connected with our ceremonies," he said.
> "It is not as if we worshipped the gods (abosom), though some mbusua do."

And he continued:-

> "We believe that, just as we can pray to God and he will answer our requests, we can ask our ancestors to help us and they will provide our needs."

The process by which ancestral beliefs are being reconciled with Christianity is a cogent question, but nevertheless for the purpose of the present work, ancestral cults are excluded from detailed study. This exclusion, it must be admitted, arises largely from the exigencies of the field research. So interrelated were the other aforementioned manifestations of "traditional" and "modern" religious belief that enquiry in the field tended often to lead from one to the other, and back. This produced a relatively concentrated body of material which could best be understood by treating it as a sub-system within a more comprehensive cosmology. In the following pages, therefore, reference will only be made to ancestral beliefs and kinship organisation in so far as they touch upon the more restricted theme. This is not to say that the question of the relation of the two to each other, and together to Christianity (or Islam), is of no interest. Indeed, this latter is another topic, which, warranting greater attention than could be devoted to it in the present study, deserves intensive research in itself.

In the pages below, discussion of the relation between Christianity and nature-god cults in Upper Saltpond is preceded by an assessment

of politicoeconomic conditions in the town. Accordingly, Chapters 2-4 (Part II of this work) consider the factors of occupational differentiation, property and kinship, and political organisation. These will subsequently be found to have a bearing upon the prevailing climate of religious belief and organisation. Chapters 5-7 (Part III) look at the Christian churches in Saltpond from both a historical and a sociological perspective. Part IV is concerned largely, though not wholly, with "traditional" religion. Chapters 8 and 9 deal with the nature-god cults in two different aspects. Chapter 10 discusses the contemporary significance of belief in witchcraft, and Chapter 11 compares the healing activities of nature-god cults and Christian churches. In Part V of the work, Chapter 12 presents the resulting conclusions, explaining the vitality of Christianity and the continuance of "traditional" belief by reference to various structural cleavages which they articulate.

PART II. THE POLITICOECONOMIC BACKGROUND.

Chapter 2. CHANGING OCCUPATIONAL STRUCTURE: EDUCATION, MIGRATION, AND THE EMERGENCE OF "CLASS".

A cosmological system cannot be fully understood without reference to its social context. This social context is made up of political relationships, which themselves arise in factors belonging to the economy. Thus, treatments of religious ideologies best begin with a discussion of the economic base of the society in which the beliefs occur.

The following chapter looks at the changing state of the economy of Saltpond. This is shown to have altered as it has been drawn into the world economy. Changes in occupational structure are examined, and the impact of education upon the population is assessed. The increasing practice of migration, both outwards and inwards, is also noted. Finally it is asked whether or to what extent these changes have brought about a new type of social organisation, namely, a system of "social class".

1. The Environment of Saltpond, and its Economic History. In the early stages of its history, the economy of Saltpond was undoubtedly more dependent on the local environment than it is today. This environment sets certain limitations. Saltpond lies within the arid strip which runs all along the Ghanaian coast except for the extreme western corner. Average annual rainfall is under 50 inches, more like the savannah zone of the northern regions than the forest regions to the immediate interior. For this reason, farming has never played a predominant part in Saltpond's economy. The original settlement, at the area now often referred to as Low Town but more properly known as Nankesedo (see map, Fig. 2.1 below, p. 37), grew up as a fishing village. The men worked as fishermen and the women as fishmongers, selling their produce at the big market at Mankesim. This is 7 miles inland and on the fringe of the forest zone. In these early days, too, salt was apparently collected on the banks of the Atufa Lagoon and traded to the interior, reputedly as far as to Kumasi, capital of

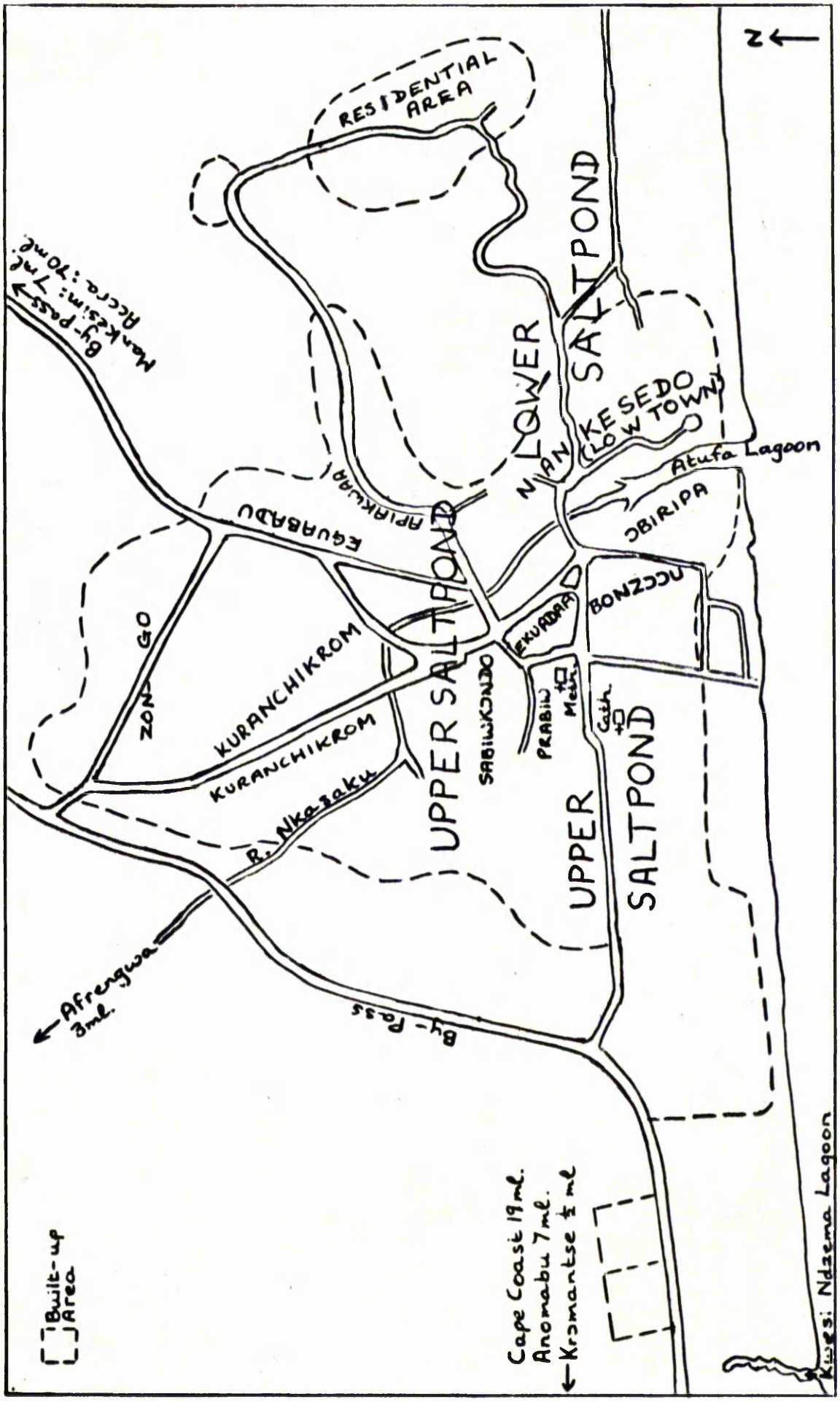

Fig.2.1. Map of Saltpond, showing Upper and Lower Saltpond and the principal town quarters.

Asante. This last activity was finally undermined in 1925, when for health reasons the colonial authorities completed a new drainage system to clear the extensive swampland and to control flooding in the town.

But by this time other more profitable commodities had risen to the fore. Since probably as long ago as the late 18th century, Saltpond had been developing into a flourishing centre of the overseas trade. Vessels from Europe began to anchor offshore of Upper Town (see Fig. 2.1, p. 37) in order to discharge their trade goods. In so doing, they provided a new source of employment to boatmen, who now ferried the cargo by canoe through the surf to the beach. This seems to have been the period of the first expansion of Upper Town, and indeed there are suggestions that this section of the town was established entirely by settlers who came to take advantage of the new trading opportunities. Saltpond is said to have been the foremost harbour-town along the Gold Coast in the mid-19th century, its anchorage being particularly suitable for the new steam shipping[1]. Initially the trade seems to have rested largely on an exchange of gold for guns, the Kumasi connection retaining its importance here during this period of Asante warfare[2]. Later the emphasis turned more upon the export of palm-oil and the import of general trade goods[3]. Saltpond became a town increasingly populated by men involved in the European trade, some acting as middle-men to areas inland and others employed as carriers. But for the latter, this was essentially a seasonal or at any rate a periodic activity. Most combined carrying when occasion arose with fishing and perhaps tending a small agricultural garden in spare moments.

By the turn of the 20th century, Saltpond was still one of the

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[1] Dickson 1969:254. It should be noted that the trading settlement of Upper Saltpond was established long after the trade in slaves had reached its height. The rise of Saltpond as a harbour town, moreover, largely occurred after the trade was abolished in 1807 (Chap. 1, pp.21-22). Saltpond never provided the site for a fortified "castle" acting as a base for European traders, and does not seem ever to have been an important outlet for slave cargoes. It has not proved possible to find evidence to show whether or not the Saltpond anchorage was ever used by the "interloper" vessels which continued to deal in slaves after the official abolition of the trade.

[2] c.f. Ward 1948:168.

[3] Dickson 1969:254-255.

six major trading ports along the Gold Coast, commanding routes inland through the then opening cocoa areas of Akyem (Akim) and Asante (Ashanti)[1]. The major European trading companies (combined in 1929 into the U.A.C.[2]) all had stations in the town, and opportunities were expanding for the employment of educated men as clerks and store-keepers. Saltpond was growing into one of the more progressive Fante settlements, with an influential section of the community holding the new sub-culture of Christianity and modernism. The 1921 Census indicates a developing economy, showing the importance of commerce and administration and the rise of specialised manual occupations (see Fig. 2.2 below, p. 40). The dawn of the "lorry age" with the 1920s provided if anything a stimulus to Saltpond's position as an outlet for the cocoa crop, but this growing prosperity suddenly came to an end when in 1928 a new deep-water harbour was opened 60 miles or so away to the west at the town of Takoradi. (Saltpond, with its central position along the Gold Coast, was actually considered for this purpose but was rejected because of underwater sand formations barring passage to the shore.) The new harbour diverted trade away from the town. Moreover, the completion shortly afterwards of a railway linking Takoradi to Akyem Oda and Kumasi finally destroyed any advantage enjoyed by Saltpond in its former trading hinterland. Thus the town slid into decline at a time when, because of the fall in international cocoa prices, Ghana was in any case experiencing the same ill fortunes as was the rest of the world. During the thirties and forties, unemployment in Saltpond reached serious dimensions, and large numbers of the menfolk left town to seek work elsewhere. The local harbour did not finally close down until 1946, but by then trade had long been stagnant. Now the large warehouses behind the Upper Town beach stand in ruins. Saltpond today has had to find other means of livelihood than those which it relied upon during its heyday.

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[1] Kimble 1963:25,n.5.
[2] Ward 1948:398.

Fig. 2.2. Saltpond population aged 16 and over by occupation and sex, 1921.

Occupation	Male		Female		Both sexes	
	Total	Per cent	Total	Per cent	Total	Per cent
A.Administrative & professional						
Clerk, typist	270	13.4	0	0.0	270	7.0
Civil servant	23	1.1	0	0.0	23	0.6
Police, warder	35	1.7	0	0.0	35	0.9
Teacher	18	0.9	0	0.0	18	0.5
Minister, catechist	1	0.1	0	0.0	1	(0.0)
Doctor, nurse, dispenser	2	0.1	0	0.0	2	0.1
Lawyer	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Other & unclassifiable	98	4.9	0	0.0	98	2.5
TOTAL	447	22.2	0	0.0	447	11.6
B.Trade						
Trader (unspecified goods)	200	9.9	823	44.3	1023	26.4
Store-keeper, assistant	16	0.8	2	0.1	18	0.5
Fish-seller	0	0.0	174	9.4	174	4.5
Kenkey-seller	0	0.0	33	1.8	33	0.9
TOTAL	216	10.7	1032	55.6	1248	32.3
C.Crafts & manual occupations						
Labourer	297	14.7	29	1.5	326	8.4
Carpenter & other wood-worker	142	7.0	0	0.0	142	3.7
Motor driver	109	5.4	0	0.0	109	2.8
Domestic servant, cook, washerman	84	4.2	83	4.5	167	4.3
Bricklayer, mason	60	3.0	0	0.0	60	1.5
Tailor, dress-maker	31	1.5	29	1.5	60	1.5
Weaver	16	0.8	0	0.0	16	0.4
Goldsmith	18	0.9	0	0.0	18	0.5
Blacksmith	14	0.7	0	0.0	14	0.4
Shoe-maker	14	0.7	0	0.0	14	0.4
Carrier	9	0.4	0	0.0	9	0.2
Mechanic, fitter	5	0.2	0	0.0	5	0.1
Painter	4	0.2	0	0.0	4	0.1
Electrician	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Baker, corngrinder	0	0.0	56	3.0	56	1.4
Other & unclassifiable	118	5.8	0	0.0	118	3.0
TOTAL	921	45.5	197	10.6	1118	28.7
D.Traditional ritual specialists						
Herbalist	8	0.4	1	0.1	9	0.2
Priest	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
TOTAL	8	0.4	1	0.1	9	0.2
E.Agriculture & fishing						
Farmer	123[1]	6.1	161	8.7	284	7.3
Fisherman, boatman	16	0.8	0	0.0	16	0.4
TOTAL	139	6.9	161	8.7	300	7.7
F.Unclassified, not working, etc.	287	14.2	466	25.1	753	19.4
TOTAL POPULATION AGED 16 OR OVER	2018	99.9	1857	100.1	3875	99.9

Source: Census Report 1921 for the Gold Coast Colony, pp.40,75-78.

[1] probably under-represented; enumerated at 126 in 1911 and at 172 in 1948.

2. The Population of Saltpond Today. Although in terms of population present-day Saltpond is far from being a major city, it ranks among the larger of the middle-size Ghanaian towns. The most recent Ghana Census recorded its population in 1970 at 11,849; this has the further age-sex characteristics shown below (Fig.2.3):-

Fig. 2.3. Saltpond population by age and sex, 1970, totals and percentages.

	Percentages					Totals				
	All ages	15 & over	14 & under	15-64	65 & over	All ages	15 & over	14 & under	15-64	65 & over
a)Saltpond										
Male	44.7	42.5	47.1	43.4	35.5	5294	2649	2645	2381	268
Female	55.3	57.5	52.9	56.6	64.5	6555	3588	2967	3102	486
Both sexes	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	11849	6237	5612	5483	754
b)Ghana										
Male	49.6	49.0	50.3	48.9	50.6					
Female	50.4	51.0	49.7	51.1	49.4					
Both sexes	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0					

Source: Census of Ghana 1970, vol.II, p.xxvi-xxvii,112-113.

Of these, the majority live in Upper Saltpond rather than in Low Town. As it happens, the two settlements have not been enumerated separately since 1931, but in that year only 651 of a total population of 6369 were living in Low Town: that is, little over 10%[1]. Since then both communities have of course grown, but as the greater part of modern development and new building have been located in Upper Town, the proportion of people living in Low Town is unlikely to have increased.

The following pages discuss the extent to which the inhabitants of Saltpond have become differentiated by education, by occupation, and by ethnic origin.

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[1] Census of the Gold Coast 1931:65.

3. Education. The Saltpond population has had wider access to education than has the population of Ghana as a whole. Census data for 1970 show that of the Saltpond population aged 15 and over, 48.6% had attended or were currently attending school (see Fig.2.4 below), as against a comparable figure for the whole country of 34.1%:-

Fig.2.4. Population aged 15 and over by school attendance and sex, Saltpond and all Ghana, 1970, totals and percentages.

	Percentages			Totals		
	All aged 15 or over.	Have attended or currently attending school.	Have never attended school.	All aged 15 or over.	Have attended or currently attending school.	Have never attended school.
a)Saltpond						
Male	100.0	68.6	31.4	2649	1817	832
Female	100.0	33.9	66.1	3588	1216	2372
Both sexes	100.0	48.6	51.4	6237	3033	3204
b)Ghana						
Male	100.0	46.0	54.0			
Female	100.0	22.7	77.3			
Both sexes	100.0	34.1	65.9			

Source: Census of Ghana 1970, vol.II, pp.xxvi-xxvii,112-113.

The discrepancy between the local and national figures reflects differences between southern and northern areas, and also differences between larger towns like Saltpond and the rural villages.

Historically there has long been a higher than average demand for schooling in the town. The Fante area in general - one of the first parts of Ghana to come into direct contact with Europe - was among the earliest to experience the resulting new culture with its increasing acceptance of Christianity and its quick understanding of the benefits of education. This culture made its strongest impact on the coastal trading towns such as Saltpond. As elsewhere in Ghana, the early Saltpond schools were provided by the missions themselves, who regarded them as deliberate

instruments of evangelisation. So great was the importance assigned them that in most cases a school was founded within a year of the opening of the local church (compare Fig.2.5 below with Fig.5.1, p.161).

Fig.2.5. Date of foundation of the Saltpond schools operating in 1973.

Upper Town	
Methodist Primary and Middle Schools:	established 1840
Catholic Primary and Middle Schools:	" 1891
Anglican Primary and Middle Schools:	" 1923
Ahmadiyya Primary and Middle Schools:	" 1923
Upper Town Urban Council Primary School:	unknown but recent
Low Town	
Low Town Urban Council Primary and Middle Schools:	unknown but recent

For some two generations during the 19th century, education in the town - as in the entire Fante region - lay solely in the hands of the Wesleyan Mission. For the next 30 years they were joined in this field by the Catholic Church only. The latter began by opening two schools in Saltpond, one in each of the two settlements, but within two years the separate establishments had been amalgamated on the new and more serviceable Upper Town site, leaving only an infants' school in Low Town. This too has since been combined with the others, but the Catholic schools continue to draw a high proportion of their pupils from Nankesedo.

No further provision was made for education in Saltpond until the 1920s, when in the one same year the newly established Ahmadiyya Moslem Mission opened its first-ever school in Ghana at this its headquarters town, and the Anglican School was also founded. It was reported that applicants for places at this latter school were more than could be readily accommodated, but there was no further educational expansion until the time of Kwame Nkrumah's efforts to provide universal elementary education following Self-Government in 1951. During the subsequent period a school was opened by the then firmly-established A.M.E. Zion Church, and a non-mission local council school not only in Upper Town but in Low Town too.

Incidentally, education seems always to have had a differential impact on the two communities. This was shown only too clearly in 1931. In that year, 556 persons in Upper Town - making up 16.4% as a percentage of the population aged 16 and over - were enumerated as "educated", compared with only 12 individuals or 3.2% in Low Town[1]. During the later years of expansion this imbalance has probably eased, but it is likely that a discrepancy still remains in Upper Town's favour, especially at the higher levels of attainment.

For Saltpond as a whole, the available data on the incidence of education reveal, not unexpectedly, a steady increase over time (see Fig.2.6):-

Fig.2.6. Percentage of Saltpond population "educated" and "not educated", 1931-1970 (see notes 2-5).

	Total	"Educated"	"Not educated"
1931	100.0	15.1[5]	84.9
1948	100.0	25.6[4]	74.4
1960	100.0	38.2[3]	61.8
1970	100.0	48.6[2]	51.4

[2]Percentage of population aged 15 and over who have attended or are currently attending school. Census of Ghana 1970, vol.II, pp.112-113.
[3]Percentage of population aged 15 and over who have attended or are currently attending school. Census of Ghana 1960, vol.II, pp.48-49.
[4]Standard III certificate-holders as percentage of population aged 16 and over. Census of the Gold Coast 1948, pp.158.
[5]Persons with "education" as percentage of population aged 16 and over. Census of the Gold Coast 1931, pp.65.

Not only this, but after a somewhat slow start there has also recently been a striking increase in the provision of education for girls. In 1891 only 9% of the pupils in the Saltpond schools were girls, a figure way behind the average for all schools in the country which stood at 20%[6]. This may be because the Wesleyan schools, with their strong emphasis on academic education, were everywhere less favoured by female students

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[1]Census of the Gold Coast 1931:65
[6]Census of the Gold Coast 1891:140,142.

than were the more practically-oriented schools established by other missions in the eastern parts of the country. The Catholic School in Saltpond, which was founded only that very year, did not receive its first girl pupil until 1909[1]. Data are not available for the period immediately following, but it would seem that the situation was slow to change. As late as 1945, H.M. Inspector of Schools noted, again of the Catholic School:

> "enrolment figures for three successive inspections showing regular, steady and substantial increase in number of boys but disclosing attitude of apathy to female education[2]".

On the other hand, he described this as "defying explanation", reporting:

> "female enrolment in majority of other Saltpond schools is on the up grade."

By 1970, the proportion of Saltpond students of all ages who were female had risen to 48.5%, compared with only 42.2% for the whole country. Alternatively, the proportions of the strictly school-age population (6-14 years) of each sex then attending school were as follows (Fig. 2.7):-

Fig.2.7. Proportion of population aged 6-14 of each sex currently attending school, Saltpond and all Ghana, 1970.

	Percentages			Totals		
	All aged 6-14 years.	Currently attending school.	Not currently attending school.	All aged 6-14 years.	Currently attending school.	Not currently attending school.
a)Saltpond						
Male	100.0	84.7	15.3	1484	1257	227
Female	100.0	74.0	26.0	1764	1305	459
Both sexes	100.0	78.9	21.1	3248	2562	686
b)Ghana						
Male	100.0	62.6	37.4			
Female	100.0	53.4	46.6			
Both sexes	100.0	58.1	41.9			

Source: Census of Ghana 1970, vol.II, pp.xxvi-xxvii,112-113.

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[1] Catholic Church, Saltpond, n.d.(2):250
[2] Catholic Church, Saltpond, n.d.(3):126.

However, as Fig.2.8 below indicates, this very recent advance in the education of girls is only slowly working through to the adult female population:-

Fig.2.8. Saltpond population aged 6 and over by school attendance, age and sex, 1970, totals and percentages.

	Percentages			Totals		
Age in years	Total.	Have attended or currently attending school.	Have never attended school.	Total.	Have attended or currently attending school.	Have never attended school.
a)6-14						
Male	100.0	86.6	13.4	1484	1285	199
Female	100.0	77.8	22.2	1764	1372	392
Both sexes	100.0	81.8	18.2	3248	2657	591
b)15-24						
Male	100.0	88.6	11.4	782	693	89
Female	100.0	64.9	35.1	962	624	338
Both sexes	100.0	75.5	24.5	1744	1317	427
c)25 & over						
Male	100.0	60.2	39.8	1867	1124	743
Female	100.0	22.5	77.5	2626	592	2034
Both sexes	100.0	38.2	61.8	4493	1716	2777
d)All aged 6 & over						
Male	100.0	75.1	24.9	4133	3102	1031
Female	100.0	48.4	51.6	5352	2588	2764
Both sexes	100.0	60.0	40.0	9485	5690	3795

Source: Census of Ghana 1970, vol.II, pp.112-113.

At the time of the field research in 1973, although most young women had been to school, only a minority of the women above their mid-20s had received any education at all. The position of men in their later years was quite the reverse. Thus, in spite of improvements which may be beginning to take place, the present generation of adult women remain in a disadvantaged position relative to men in respect of education.

The disparity is even more striking in the case of education at secondary level or above. As will be explained in Chapter 3 (pp.90-91),

financial responsibility for children's education lies with their fathers. In the days when fees were charged for primary education, men generally used their necessarily finite resources to send their sons rather than their daughters to school. Though statistical evidence is unavailable, the same trend seems to arise nowadays at secondary level, where fees are still payable. Very few Saltpond girls even today are educated above middle-school level. (It may be noted, in passing, that the highly respected Mfantsiman Girls' Secondary School, which stands on the outskirts of the town, is not intended as a local resource and takes only a handful of its pupils from Saltpond.)

Education is regarded as desirable not strictly for its own sake, but because it is through education that individuals win lucrative jobs in the developing professional and semi-professional sector. In earlier generations, primary schooling on its own provided a ticket to employment of this kind, as a clerk or teacher, but nowadays education above middle-school level is essential if success is to be assured. For the highest positions, a university degree or equivalent is required. The following section will show the kinds of employment available in Saltpond to persons with different levels of education.

4. Contemporary Occupational Structure. In spite of the recession experienced in Saltpond during the thirties and forties, there are marked continuities between the contemporary economy and that of earlier times. As formerly, employment opportunities arise largely within the sectors of commerce and administration, or else are generated by them. Relative to these, the primary sector is less important, employing only 10.2% of the total adult population (see Fig.2.9, p.48). This falls way behind the national level of 39.4%, and it is for this reason that Saltpond is not regarded as primarily either a fishing or an agricultural town. On the other hand, the Ghana Census, which classifies these occupations together with forestry and hunting - both insignificant in Saltpond-, shows that nearly

Fig.2.9. Economic activity of population aged 15 and over, Saltpond and all Ghana, 1970, totals and percentages.

	Percentages							Totals						
	All in employ-ment.	Employ[d] in agri-culture & fishing	Employ[d] in other occu-pations	Un-employ[d]	Home-maker	Other: volun-tarily un-employ,[d] retired student etc.	All aged 15 & over.	All in employ-ment	Employ[d] in agri-culture & fishing	Employ[d] in other occu-pations	Un-employ[d]	Home-maker	Other: volun-tarily un-employ,[d] retired student etc.	All aged 15 & over
a)Saltpond														
Male	65.9	17.2	48.7	11.0	0.3	22.7	99.9	1746	455	1291	292	9	602	2649
Female	62.4	5.0	57.4	7.6	12.6	17.3	99.9	2242	181	2061	271	453	622	3588
Both sexes	63.9	10.2	53.7	9.0	7.4	19.6	99.9	3988	636	3352	563	462	1224	6237
b)Ghana														
Male	77.1	45.7	31.4	6.4	1.0	15.5	100.0							
Female	61.1	33.4	27.7	2.4	26.1	10.4	100.0							
Both sexes	69.0	39.4	29.5	4.4	13.8	12.9	100.0							

Source: Census of Ghana 1970, vol.II, pp.xxvi-xxvii,112-113.

one-fifth of the 2649 adult males in Saltpond work in these combined fields. They represent just over a quarter of the 1746 men actually in employment. The primary sector must clearly be taken into account in any treatment of the Saltpond economy.

The significance of Saltpond nowadays as even a fishing town is outranked by other - smaller - settlements nearby, in both percentage and absolute terms. At first sight, the town certainly differs from most of the other fishing-villages visible along the main road to Cape Coast, which are especially distinctive for their rows of round mud ovens used by women for smoking fish. This is partly because the main road runs only through Upper Saltpond, which has never been a fishing community in any real sense. Even in the original fishing-villages of Nankesedo, however, there are only a few ovens confined to out-of-the-way corners.

Nevertheless, as many as 9 canoes put to sea daily from Nankesedo. Each has a crew of 10 to 14 men, these almost invariably illiterate. Here in Low Town, not only the fishing industry but much of the social organisation which it has generated have remained, despite the socioeconomic changes affecting Saltpond as a whole. The fishing sector operates according to widespread practice, the catch being divided into three parts. One-third is taken by the owner of the boat, and the next third by the owner of the outboard motor. The last part goes for further division among the crew, and so it is that no ordinary crew-member can number among the exceptionally wealthy. Some of the Nankesedo women work as fishmongers, buying up the catch and carrying it for sale, either to the local market in Upper Town or to Mankesim. (Thus they are regarded for census purposes as traders rather than "agricultural" workers.) Incidentally, Nankesedo has always differed from some neighbouring communities in that here there are also "middle-women" who buy directly from the boats. Each such woman has an arrangement with one or more boats to take the whole of their catch, and sells it out to the fishmongers afterwards in smaller and more convenient

quantities. Some of the fishmongers are themselves able to enhance their returns by smoking their fish, a process which ensures that the fish keep longer and can be transported further.

The Nankesedo fishing-boats account for the major part of the fishing activity in Saltpond, but there are yet more people in the town who fish by other methods. One alternative is the technique of casting a net into the sea directly from the beach. A couple such nets are cast from Nankesedo by men who for one reason or another do not go to sea. In addition, at the extreme western end of Upper Town and huddled beneath the coconut palms, there is a small settlement of migrant Ewe people[1] deriving from the eastern corner of Ghana who also fish in this manner. Each of these nets can provide employment for the 10 to 15 men needed to set it and pull it back to the shore. There are still further possibilities for catching small fish in the lagoon, or crabs along the beach, which have been taken up by a few individuals from Nankesedo. However it is small-scale work and is in fact often left to children in their spare time.

At the most generous of estimates, then, fishing can only account for somewhere under half of the Saltpond men enumerated in the census as within the primary sector. The remainder are engaged in agriculture of various forms. Many households maintain a small kitchen garden to supply part of their needs, the work often being left to junior dependants. At the time of the research, the cultivation of kitchen gardens had been expanding in response to "Operation Feed Yourself", an official campaign of the new government of 1972 designed to reduce dependence on imported foodstuffs. The typical garden, however - raising crops such as cassava and plantain, tomatoes and peppers -, is tended only in spare moments and does not produce enough even to feed the household throughout the year, let alone supply a surplus for sale. Apart from this there are some people - often women (though only 5.0% of adult women are engaged in any form

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[1] c.f. Wyllie 1969:396-410.

of agriculture) and sometimes quite elderly - who own small farm plots at the outskirts of town. This land they tend themselves, though often they secure the help of children or unemployed young people at peak times. If the land is used for food crops it can make a more substantial contribution to household consumption than the kitchen gardens. But more commonly the land is used to raise a cash crop like "tiger-nuts" which brings a significant addition to the owner's income, though this is relatively small-scale enterprise with corresponding returns.

The only really large-scale cash-cropping locally involves the cultivation of coconuts. The deep fringes of coconut-palm which run behind the beaches of these coastal areas of Ghana rank among their most characteristic features. The almost unbroken line of trees along the beach at Saltpond in fact consists of a number of quite distinct though sizeable plantations, each with its particular owner and definite boundaries. The owner generally employs other men - who are in most cases illiterate - to help him harvest the crop and plant new trees. Often in fact the owner does little of the actual work himself, but rather supervises his workers' efforts. The nuts find their outlets through the markets, both locally and further afield: the fibre is sent to a factory which has been established at the back of the town where it is woven into ropes and doormats.

The owner of a coconut plantation is invariably a man of some means, for just as the investment in land and labour can be high, so the rewards are good. In this respect his role is not unlike that of the entrepreneur in other fields of activity, and indeed, agriculture can be counted among the choices which men of business take into account when making their decisions. Their enterprise in this field has not been limited by the spatial and environmental restrictions of the town itself. Among the wealthier townsmen are some who keep profitable farms in the more fertile regions of the interior[1].

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[1] However I did not learn of any who had bought their way into the particularly profitable field of cocoa-farming.

As the previous paragraphs show, the primary sector in Saltpond employs a substantial minority of the population, but can scarcely be regarded as the base of the local economy. This still rests largely on activities which became important during the earlier boom years. For instance, Saltpond has retained enough of its commercial significance still to rank among the leading smaller towns in this respect. Within the traditional exchange system, granted, the town's own market never won for itself an importance even to approach that of the big market at nearby Mankesim. But along the main street in Upper Town can be found the premises of a couple of nationally-organised trading corporations and two different banks (though these employ barely 10 workers between them). The remainder of the street is lined with a variety of other stores. These are privately-owned - usually by an inhabitant of the town - and deal in lines such as foodstuffs, hardware, cloth and medicines. They are in general organised along "modern" lines and supervised by educated personnel. As often as not the owner takes charge himself, though he may leave his shop temporarily under the care of illiterate staff, perhaps his female relatives. Other stores, usually on a rather smaller and simpler scale, are directly owned by women themselves. In the other section of the town, in Nankesedo, there are very few trading premises at all, and none is organised on a large scale. Altogether these stores can provide openings for only a few, and commerce - at any rate in its "modern" forms of organisation - accounts for a relatively minor proportion of all paid employment.

The real sense in which Saltpond survives as a commercial town is through the individual enterprise of persons trading and otherwise engaged on their own account. Although the departure of the European trading companies in the 1930s left those whom they had directly employed in difficulties, many who in the role of middle-men had been the companies' clients were well able to adapt to the situation. They had accumulated

capital, often in considerable quantity; they had acquired expertise; and the country being then well into the "lorry age", transport was becoming increasingly more easy. These men today, or their heirs, typically combine a variety of business interests in many parts of Ghana. They may, as has been mentioned, own a store in town - or in Cape Coast, Accra, Kumasi, or any of the major southern cities. Most own houses, usually in Saltpond but often in distant towns also, and draw rents. Some have yet other interests; they may perhaps own a lorry or a fishing-boat, or have provided any other item of equipment necessary to enable a tradesman to pursue his occupation. In each case they receive their agreed percentage of the takings as a return on their investment. This sector includes many who have now retired from former paid employment, and some still working who put out part of their salary on the side. It even includes a small proportion of women, although on the whole women do not hold enough capital to engage in business on a large scale. Men in this line of activity may well be illiterate, but more commonly they have been educated to about Standard VI. Being generally fairly elderly, they therefore on the whole belong to the educational elite of their own generation. The few women in this field, on the other hand, are mostly illiterate like the bulk of the female population. This "business" sector is difficult to quantify, but it includes most of the more wealthy men of both Upper Town and Low Town, and is recognised as influential.

And, as indicated above, these man of affairs create much of the employment prospect in the town for those of its male population less privileged by wealth or education. By establishing businesses themselves or by making loans, they provide opportunities for craftsmen and tradesmen of all types: largely for carpenters and builders, or lorry-drivers and mechanics, but also in services such as tailoring and barbering. (However, since the departure of the European officials and merchants, the formerly important sector of male domestic service has declined.) Craftsmen and tradesmen are typically illiterate, or, if under the age of 25 to 30, educated

to middle-school level only. Quantification of this "artisan" sector is again not easy, since the more recent Ghana censuses give no explicit data on non-agricultural occupations. Nevertheless, it is substantial in Saltpond, probably accounting - with the inclusion of labourers employed by government agencies - for about half the employed male population.

Over and above its commercial activity, the second advantage which Saltpond derives from its former prominent position is its continuing importance as a local administrative centre. The town has held its position in this field through all the oft-occurring changes of the late colonial period and independence. Indeed, it has probably been its administrative activity which has been the principal factor bringing the town out to what is seen as a more hopeful phase of regeneration. Saltpond in 1973 provided accommodation both for the so-called Mfantsiman Urban Council (responsible for basic amenities - roads, markets, water and suchlike - in Saltpond and the surrounding area), and also for the various specialised agencies of Saltpond District (dealing with education, health, social welfare, town planning, and police). In addition there are other government establishments in the town, not only those which are commonly found such as the post office, the police station and the electricity department, but also a hospital and a large geological survey station. Saltpond has further importance as an educational centre, being the home of a Ministry of Education department for curriculum research and in-service teacher training. These establishments open up various employment opportunities for people with the requisite schooling. (This, nowadays, usually means at least some education above middle-school standard, if only in the form of vocational training.) On the teaching side itself, the large number of schools which Saltpond's population warrants provide yet more opportunities for employment at this level. It is a striking fact that almost all this modern development has been located in Upper Saltpond, though this does not of course mean that residents of Nankesedo do not make the short daily journeys required

to work-places on the other side of town.

Professional and semi-professional workers in the public sector of administration, health and education probably account for nearly one-quarter of the employed men in the town. This refers to employment in grades from the graduate principals - the senior administrators, the doctors and pharmacist, etc. - through the ranks of junior administrators and less qualified teachers, of male nurses, clerks and typists. (It excludes, of course, the barely educated and the illiterate employed as labourers by the urban council and other organisations with practical duties.) Women, too, have found employment in this sector, but in fewer numbers. Most, apart from exceptional cases of a few very highly qualified women holding down senior positions, are engaged as clerical workers, primary school teachers and nurses, but all these fields employ as many if not more men than women. Administration probably accounts for little more than five per cent of all the 2242 employed women in Saltpond.

On the whole, unlike the men, women have not yet been able to capitalise upon education. As shown previously (Fig.2.4 , p.42), it is still the case that the majority of adult women have never attended school at all. The number winning an automatic ticket to professional occupations through secondary education has so far been minimal, and of those younger women completing the now fairly usual middle-school course, only a lucky few gain access to vocational training and employment with modern organisations. But women, like men, are generally expected to be gainfully employed in one way or another. Therefore most women in Saltpond are to be found working in "traditional" or "para-traditional" occupations. Farming and fishmongering have already been mentioned as likely occupations for women, but the most common of all is trading. Some of the women traders rent stalls in the local market where they deal in foodstuffs; others conduct their trade at the big market at Mankesim where they have a wider choice of saleable commodities, including, for instance, cloth. Yet more set up a table by the roadside

or cry their wares in small head-loads through the streets, but whatever the method, women's trade is mostly small-scale business. It is rare for a Saltpond woman to be a large owner of capital, and those who run flourishing stores or who have profitable trading interests in Accra are very much the exception.

Foremost among other important fields of female employment ranks, probably, dress-making, but here again a girl is fortunate to be able to enter this trade, for she must first be able to finance her apprenticeship and subsequently provide herself with the necessary sewing-machine. Even then the trade is precarious, for although established seamstresses with wide reputations can do well, often also dealing in cloth as a sideline, a new worker may well find little business and remain essentially unemployed. Other women are engaged in food-processing and catering. Many sell cooked food beside the streets or in the market, and there are now growing opportunities with office and works canteens providing for the increasing number of people in full-time paid employment. Some canteens have been set up entirely on the cooks' personal initiative. The last important sector of female workers consists of domestic servants, largely young girls employed as housemaids until such time as they should think about marriage. These girls have the expectation, on the satisfactory completion of their duties, that their employer should set them up for life on their own account by providing the capital needed for entry into trade, dress-making, or some other occupation.

But unemployment among both sexes remains a subject for concern in the town. In 1970, the Ghana Census showed levels of 11.0% for men and 7.6% for women, and the latter figure might more appropriately be swelled by the further 12.6% classified as "home-makers" (see Fig.2.9, p.48). Now that as many as 78.9% of all children (84.7% of boys, 74.0% of girls; Fig.2.8, p.46) are sent to school, finding work for the ordinary middle-school leaver is a recognised problem. This can appear more immediately

obvious for the girls, since the boys tend to drift away to the cities seeking jobs while their sisters on the whole stay behind. Outsiders have been known to say that the Saltpond people are lazy and work-shy, but this criticism is probably unfair since there have been times when for most people work was quite unavailable. Nowadays it is not characteristic of the town to find hordes of unoccupied people on street corners, but only small knots of men whiling away their time together when they have been unable to fill their working hours more productively. Indeed, under-employment is perhaps as great a problem as unemployment for all but those in regular paid work. No man or woman working on the land can expect to be fully occupied for all the week or all the year, nor can a tradesman or crafts-women necessarily hope for enough business to fill the whole of the time available. Many people try to cope with this difficulty by taking up a number of different occupations, combining perhaps a small farm plot with a little trade or any casual job which might come along; for this reason, no data on occupational structure or employment can be regarded as strictly representating the facts.

With Saltpond's rather dismal economic history over recent decades, its people have had an especial interest in any possibilities for improving employment prospects, particularly in trying to attract development projects. Their efforts have lately met with some success, and now on the outskirts of the town there is a large ceramics factory for the manufacture of bathroom fittings. This draws upon mineral deposits from nearby, as well as others from further afield. In 1973 it had a workforce of over 150, predominantly illiterate manual workers, most of whom were engaged after the 1970 census. Including also the coir factory, with its smaller work-force of 36, Saltpond had by 1973 a sector of factory employees approaching ten per cent of the employed male population. This, it was hoped, would expand further. The factories give deliberate preference in matters of employment to local people, with the aim of attracting back to the town

men who have left for the cities or might otherwise do so.

Migration has had a profound effect on the Saltpond population. This arises from movements not only outwards, but also inwards. The next section discusses how, as a result of this practice, certain occupational sectors have become the preserve of persons of diverse ethnic origin.

5. Migration. Labour in Ghana is on the whole easily mobile, and over two-fifths of the population live in towns other than their places of birth[1]. This migration has been shown to consist basically in movements from rural areas to the towns[2]. Now, while Saltpond is clearly "urban" according to census definitions[3], out-migration is recognised by townspeople as extensive. Statistics are unfortunately not available, but some suggestion of its magnitude may be found in figures showing the imbalance of sexes in the town (see Fig.2.10 below):-

Fig.2.10. Percentage of residents (all ages) male and female, Saltpond and all Ghana, by place of birth, 1970.

	All places of birth	This town.	Other town, this region.	Other region.	Other West African country.	Other non-West African country.
a)Saltpond						
Male	44.7	44.1	41.1	47.6	71.7	81.4
Female	55.3	55.9	58.9	52.4	28.3	18.6
Both sexes	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
b)Ghana						
Male	49.6	49.9	42.7	54.3	60.4	57.5
Female	50.4	50.1	57.3	45.7	39.6	42.5
Both sexes	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Census of Ghana 1970, vol.II, pp.xxvi-xxvii,112-113.

Local people seem to have first become aware that large numbers of their menfolk were leaving town to seek work elsewhere during the economic depression of the thirties and forties, and since that time the preponderance

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[1] Census of Ghana 1970, vol.II:xxvi.
[2] Birmingham, Neustadt and Omaboe 1967, vol.II:111-112,117-118.
[3] All localities with a population of 5,000 or more. Census of Ghana 1960, vol.IV:x.

of women has been treated as something of a problem. A high proportion of the skilled and semi-skilled men, some illiterate, are still away today. They work as labourers, or in similar occupations, with industries such as the harbours and railways of Tema and Takoradi, or the mines of Asante Region. Young male school-leavers, too, with the middle-school certificate now typical of their generation, readily take up opportunities to join relatives in the major cities in order to look for work where prospects are thought to be more favourable. Those who succeed are invariably employed away from their home-town. In fact, the higher the education, the more necessary it is to move away from town, and new openings locally for the university educated are so severely limited that it is virtually essential for them to look elsewhere for employment fitting their qualifications. Thus Saltpond men of this status and of working age are rarely encountered in town except when they make special visits.

These are the reasons, then, for the shortage of menfolk, but it must be noted that women too not infrequently move away from their birth-place. The few very highly qualified Saltpond women, like their more common male counterparts, almost invariably find work outside the town. Wives often (though not necessarily) join their husbands away on transfer, the trend being that the higher the husband's educational and occupational status, the more likely he is to contract a monogamous and co-residential marriage. Alternatively, there is the long-established but now increasing likelihood of women marrying into other towns beyond the confines of Saltpond itself. Other women have left town by their own initiative, in order to take up better opportunities to follow their own callings as traders and suchlike. In spite of cases such as these, however, female migration out of Saltpond seems not to rival that of the men.

Migrants of both sexes and of all social strata do not normally abandon their ties with their native town and lineages, returning at

week-ends if they live nearby, or otherwise on special occasions such as Christmas, Easter and the Town Festivals. Many make remittances to their dependants still in the town, and almost all continue to be assessed for funeral dues by their respective lineages. They travel home for funerals of lineage members and other close relatives, and are in the last resort brought home to be buried with their own ancestors. Nevertheless, for most purposes of sociological analysis, they are best excluded from the field of study.

On the other hand, as Fig.2.11 (p.61) shows, there are substantial numbers of migrants into the town from outside, and these need mostly to be included within the population under consideration. Most in-migrants derive from other Fante groups or from culturally related peoples of the Central and Western Regions. In 1960, when the two regions were still combined as one, they accounted for 28.2% of all Saltpond residents, as against 15.1% from further afield[1]. Next most common, probably, are migrants from the similarly Akan areas of Akuapem (Akwapim) and Asante (Ashanti). There are also much smaller numbers of non-Akan Ga and Ewe peoples deriving from the far south-eastern regions of Ghana. More important than these numerically, though, are the non-Akan migrants from the northern regions.

The significance of in-migrants is different at different occupational levels. The northerners are mostly employed as labourers or else engaged in trade. In addition, the local police force employs a high proportion of northern people. Almost all the northerners live semi-permanently in the zongo on the outskirts of Upper Saltpond. This quarter of the town, rather similar to Low Town in area and population, has its own virtually separate political organisation and a distinctive Islamic culture. Although the police officers do not live in the zongo, they too live more or less

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[1] Census of Ghana 1960, vol.II:48.

Fig.2.11. Birthplace of residents (all ages) of Saltpond and all Ghana, by sex, 1970.

	Percentages						Totals					
	Total.	This town.	Other town, this region.	Other region.	Other West African country	Other non-West African country.	Total.	This town.	Other town, this region.	Other region.	Other West African country.	Other non-West African country.
a)Saltpond												
Male	100.0	60.0	17.9	19.2	2.2	0.7	5294	3177	947	1016	119	35
Female	100.0	61.4	20.7	17.1	0.7	0.1	6555	4022	1359	1119	47	8
Both sexes	100.1	60.8	19.5	18.0	1.4	0.4	11849	7199	2306	2135	166	43
b)Ghana												
Male	100.0	57.5	18.0	19.6	4.7	0.2						
Female	100.0	56.7	23.8	16.3	3.1	0.1						
Both sexes	100.0	57.1	20.9	17.9	3.9	0.2						

Source:Census of Ghana 1970, vol.II, pp.xxvi-xxvii,112-113.

apart from the indigenous population in their own lodgings in Upper Town. For the purpose of this study, neither group need be regarded as within the "social system" of Saltpond.

This is far from the case in respect of migrants from the south. These, with the exception of the numerically insignificant migrant Ewe fishermen (see p.50), are not residentially segregated and interact more closely with the indigenous population. In spite of their fairly diverse ethnic backgrounds, they are conveniently regarded in the context of Saltpond social organisation as forming a single category of "outsiders". They include, as well as in-marrying wives, people who have come to Saltpond to trade on their own account, and others in paid employment. In the lower income brackets their numbers are relatively few in comparison with the native Saltpond people; as mentioned earlier (p.57), deliberate attempts are sometimes made to restrict any unskilled work as becomes available in the town to people of local origin. Within the professional and semi-professional sector, however, where higher income levels operate, the number of these outsiders increases. The junior grades of, for instance, clerks, nurses and school-teachers still include a significant number of local people working alongside the incomers. But - paradoxically, since Saltpond people with special qualifications must generally leave home in order to find suitable work - the senior positions in the town are invariably filled by outsiders. This is especially true for personnel of graduate status, of whom only a bare number of individuals belong to the town by birth.

The presence in the town of outsiders such as these has arisen because an increasing preference is being given to qualifications of achievement rather than to those of birth. This has had a subtle importance for the indigenous population. The next section will show the extent to which the two categories of people are becoming combined within a single system of "social class".

6. The Emergence of "Class". The preceding sections of this chapter have shown that the population of Saltpond is now markedly differentiated on the basis of occupation. Although income data were not quoted, the precise figures being difficult to obtain, it is also clear that certain broad occupational categories correspond with different levels of income. The population is thus not only occupationally but also economically differentiated. Entry to the more privileged groups is secured by education, or by a monopoly of money-capital, or by a combination of the two. Conditions in Saltpond therefore satisfy the objective criteria for the presence of "class" in a Weberian sense[1]. Later chapters of this thesis will point out that differences are arising in the life-styles of the privileged and the less privileged groups. What appears to be lacking, however, with certain qualifications (see pp.206-207;340-341), is any clear consciousness of the existence of a "class" system or of an individual's own place within it.

The question whether "class" can be said to exist in the absence of this subjective factor is one which has repeatedly troubled sociologists and anthropologists. Some, such as P.C. Lloyd[2], take the view that to use the term where the criteria are only partially met is to divest it of its true meaning. The alternative position is taken here, for it is considered that wherever the objective or structural factors are alike, the resulting type of social organisation should be referred to by the same term. From this perspective, the subjective factors, which vary, emerge in sharp focus as a most suitable field for study.

A "class" system will therefore be said to exist in Saltpond, though labels like "middle-class" and "working-class" - which have gathered some rather specific connotations - will be avoided. The higher social class in the town will be taken as that which is made up of professional people, whatever their ethnic origin, and of traders - mostly local - who have

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[1] Weber 1947:424-428.
[2] Lloyd 1966:49-62.

comparable incomes. The lower class, on the other hand, will be taken to consist of the manual and agricultural workers, and the unemployed. The class status of women is seen to be often ambiguous.

Later chapters of this thesis will look at ways in which the different social classes employ religious belief and organisation, among other aspects of culture, to delineate and even reinforce their respective positions. Within these developments will be found, at some points, the germ of "class consciousness". Before dealing with these matters, though, it will be necessary to consider the extent to which other forms of social organisation based on kinship and locality continue to operate. This is the task in the remaining chapters of Part II. These will also give indications of a coalescence which has occurred between the higher "social class" and the "traditionally" superior social stratum, by virtue of the emphasis accorded to wealth and income in both the "modern" and the "traditional" status systems.

Chapter 3. PROPERTY, INHERITANCE AND KINSHIP.

Opening the discussion of the politicoeconomic base to religious belief and organisation in Saltpond, the preceding chapter has shown that social relationships of a new type have crystallised as the town has been drawn into the "modern" monetary economy. These, it was argued, are most suitably described as relationships of "social class". They are, as Chapter 2 demonstrates, becoming increasingly significant, but relationships of other types retain an importance nevertheless. Prominent among these are relationships of kinship, which may equally be expected to find expression in terms of cosmology. It is therefore the task in the present chapter to look at the contemporary state of kinship organisation in the town.

The views which other commentators have taken on Fante kinship have been divergent. Matrilineal principles are generally acknowledged to operate throughout the area, as among other Akan peoples, but not all writers consider the Fante to be characterised by matrilineal descent as such. J.B. Christensen, the author of the only full-length monograph yet to appear on the Fante, concludes that they should correctly be said to exhibit "double descent"[1]. His argument is based largely on the supposition, of which more will be said later (pp.92-93), that the Fante have always placed a stronger emphasis on the paternal line of descent than have other Akan groups such as the Asante. A slightly different standpoint sometimes taken is that an increased "patrilineal" emphasis has arisen as a result of economic changes of the kind referred to in the previous chapter[2]. Writers of this persuasion believe that matriliny is - as Mary Douglas summarises their position - a "fragile institution" - one which is not compatible with economic advance and economic differentiation[3].

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[1] Christensen 1954a:3-5,128-129.
[2] e.g. Priestley 1969:182-187; also Christensen himself, 1954a:132.
[3] Douglas 1969:121-122.

She herself suggests that this need not be the case in the particular circumstance of an expanding economy[1].

The present chapter argues that the descent system in Saltpond should be regarded as "matrilineal" rather than "double unilineal". It also comments on the apparent survival of matrilineal groups in the town in spite of the relatively high level of economic development, and draws upon some of the insights of Mary Douglas to explain why this might be so. The discussion begins, though, with a consideration of the economic principles on which Saltpond kinship organisation rests, namely, those of land tenure and the ownership of property.

1. Land Tenure. Akan systems of land tenure have always lain at the foundations of their "traditional" sociopolitical structures. This is so in Saltpond, even though the town has never been primarily agricultural in character, and despite the fact - no doubt connected - that the Saltpond lands are relatively limited. These reach for little more than a mile along the coast from west to east, and for scarcely 4 miles north from the shore. At first sight the fundamental principle in their allocation might seem to be the demarcation between the territories of the two separate communities, with the original settlement of Low Town holding broadly speaking the tract behind the beach to the east of Atufa Lagoon, and Upper Town the areas west of the lagoon and further inland (see map, Fig.2.1, p.37). However, this differentiation, associated though it is with the existence of the two political units, conceals important uniformities at a slightly lower level of organisation.

For according to local conceptions (an ideal view of a situation which has actually been blurred by socioeconomic changes), the lands of the two communities in Saltpond belong not to their respective Chiefs but to the "Stools". These are in effect symbols of the various matrilineal descent groups (mbusua; sing: ebusua). Each of these groups has in its

[1] Douglas 1969:130-131.

possession a wooden stool, carved to the traditional Akan curved design, which is said to have belonged to the founder of the lineage. The foremost present-day lineage official is described as the "Stool-Holder" (see pp.79-80). The Stool itself, which is kept in concealment and guarded with care, now acts as an object for lineage ritual (Chap. 8, pp.342-343).

Thus, the Saltpond territories are regarded as consisting of lands owned by the different matrilineal groups. One informant explained how he understood land rights to have been acquired in the following manner:-

> "Stools which have landed property," he told me, "own this because the forebearer-warrior first settled and laid claim to the said lands either by conquest or by exploration or by long, exclusive and undisturbed tenancy. He then made himself a Stool to symbolise his authority ..... His descendants through his sisters constitute the ebusua, and he is the ebusuapanyin who guards and protects all members. So ebusua land and property starts from one man handing his property over to a family tree which is forever growing. Ownership is vested in the whole ebusua with the ebusuapanyin as the chief administrator."

The real point for the present is that each of the communities consists not just of one such land-owning descent group but of several. The two Chiefs, who are in fact the holders of the Stools of their own groups, therefore have title to the "Stool Lands" of their respective groups but not to the "Stool Lands" of other groups.

In spite of the ideology quoted above, however, it is not strictly true today that all land in Saltpond is owned by one of the various local matrilineages. Stool Lands can be and have been alienated. An individual wishing to acquire land in his own right must approach the Stool-Holder of a land-owning group, his own or any other, and a transfer by outright sale can be completed with the additional consent of three of the lineage elders (alternatively, the applicant may seek to acquire only rights of usufruct in return for rent or a lump sum payment). Under normal circumstances, land which has been acquired outright by purchase becomes the individual property of the buyer, a distinction of much importance

to the owner since this type may be willed freely away from a man's matrilineal heirs to his own children (see pp.70-72). However, outright alienation of lineage land is a controversial practice, and, as Case 34 in Chapter 9 shows, the precise nature of a particular transfer can later become a matter for dispute.

The basic distinction as regards land use lies between building land and agricultural land. Demand in the renewedly expanding Saltpond is particularly focused upon the former. A considerable quantity of building land has by now been alienated to corporations such as government or the churches for use in a variety of community purposes, but equally pressing has been the desire for housing both from temporary residents and from the more prosperous native menfolk. Every Saltpond man would like to build a house of his own away from the communally-owned lineage properties, and for those who do so, various options are open in the way of acquisition of building-sites. Cheapest is to obtain permission to build on one's own lineage land, but in this case not only the land but also the house itself reverts to the lineage at the owner's death. It is thus thought preferable to buy one's land outright, and so retain the right to will the entire property freely. Otherwise a building-site can be rented, with the right to bequeath the property remaining a subject for negotiation. All processes of outright alienation, incidentally, have contributed to the present confusion of what is said to have once been a clear arrangement of lineage lands in the centre of the town (p.78).

There are similar choices in the acquisition of farming land. This again may be either bought outright (apparently a rare transaction in Saltpond), or acquired in right of usufruct only, or else sought from within the matrilineal descent group. Most of the farmers in Saltpond are tenant farmers. These pay either the government statutory rent of 50 pesewas (£0-16) per acre per year to the land-owner (probably a Stool-Holder), or, more likely, the customary lump sum payment known as "token

drink". Lineage members who farm on Stool Lands are not required to pay rent, though they are expected strictly to observe their obligations at the time of the annual festival for the "renewal" of the Stool (pp.342-343).

In the section which follows, there will be further discussion of the principles governing the transfer of rights over land by inheritance.

2. Property and Inheritance. Property among the Fante is often classified into two types: moveable property (e.g. cash, jewellery, cloth) and immoveable property (land, buildings). The classification seems to have first been made by the lawyer John Mensah Sarbah in his classic Fanti Customary Laws of 1897[1]. It is, however, of less practical importance in Saltpond than his subsequent distinction[2] between "family property" - or, as it will be termed here, "lineage property" - and "individual property". These categories are especially significant because different rules of inheritance apply to each.

"Lineage property" can be defined as any resource or item which is owned corporately by the matrilineage or one of its segments (see below, pp.77-84). It can therefore include both the moveable and the immoveable items of property mentioned above. This property has either been acquired by inheritance within the group, or by the combined effort of members of the same one group, or in return for resources belonging to the group. Sometimes a further distinction is made between "ancestral property" inherited from a lineage ancestor, near or remote, and other kinds of lineage property, but this again has no automatic consequence as regards inheritance.

There is, however, a further difference (though rarely made explicit and frequently blurred in practice) between property owned corporately by an entire group and property inherited by the heir within the group to be used by himself alone; the former category includes in particular land, and also houses. There is a conceptual problem which arises here because

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[1] Mensah Sarbah 1897:57.

[2] Mensah Sarbah's term "family property" (1897:57) is that most often used by Fante themselves speaking in English, but is considered by anthropologists to be inexact; thus Christensen (1954a:43) adopted the terminology "abusua property".

ownership of some resources tends to become restricted within lineage segments, as will be demonstrated shortly (pp.71, 83-84). Nevertheless, in connection with lineage or "Stool" lands, there are few complicating factors. Any person who can claim membership of the land-owning kinship unit, the ebusua, by matrilineal descent, has the right to build or farm on lineage land without payment of rent and can transmit this right to his matrilineal heirs. This is so, even though the land itself is under the control of the Stool-Holder, who may alienate it absolutely with the consent of other lineage elders in return for cash. However, any lineage member who is dispossessed of the land he uses, for this or any other reason, has to be compensated elsewhere. Proceeds of land sales remain moreover the property of the whole unit, although a Stool-Holder while in office has considerable opportunity to divert lineage funds to his own use. (The ultimate ownership of these "Stool" resources becomes finally clear if an incumbent should be deposed, for he is then divested of the assets he gained with the Stool. Indeed, in some cases, reputedly, de-stooled Saltpond chiefs have lost their individually and previously-acquired assets as well.)Actual rights of usufruct of lineage land assigned to a member usually pass at his death to a close matrilineal heir. Land acquired jointly by several lineage members or inherited from their father by a group of siblings should pass to their matrilineal heirs and become lineage property.

The other kind of resources which, though held by an individual lineage member, nevertheless rank for one of the reasons given above as lineage property, are said to be inherited by the holder's single matrilineal heir. This should be a brother, or failing that the son of the eldest sister. This rule can apply to items such as jewellery and cloth, and, in a sense, houses. These latter, however, constitute something of a special case, for though they are inherited by the eldest surviving brother or the senior of the sisters' sons, the remaining siblings or sisters' children have the right to continue living in the house without payment of rent. It is

probably more correct to regard the heir as inheriting the house rather as custodian on behalf of this small group of matrikin than as truly in his own right. Rights in the house at subsequent generations are transmitted in accordance with matrilineal principles through the sisters and sisters' daughters in this small group, but not through the brothers or the sisters' sons. In this way there arise, over time, house-owning kinship units of narrower depth than the land-owning matrilineal groups mentioned previously. These lesser groups, too, have each their own head, who supervises their affairs and the administration of their joint property. The question of terminology and the mode of transmission of offices will be discussed in a following section (see below, pp.77-86).

The rules governing the transmission of a man's individual property are very different from those pertaining to lineage property. "Individual property" is that which is gained by a man's own efforts without help from his lineage, or which is received by gift to himself personally. This category therefore normally covers a man's earning from his occupation, and any assets purchased with the proceeds. The most valuable of these is likely to be the house which he has built for himself, or the land he has bought outright. Property of this type may be bestowed freely where the owner pleases, which in practice means away from his matrilineal heirs to his own children. However, the matter is subject to additional legal conditions concerning his testacy and the form of his marriage. If a man in his lifetime contracted a statutory marriage (pp.86-87), his individual property is divided into thirds between his widow, his children and his matrilineal heir respectively; the widow and the children thereby receive protection even though he should die intestate. The problem of the children's position at their father's death is one which under the predominant system of matrilineal inheritance preoccupies most men in Saltpond, who usually take care to make their wills in good time. By doing this, a man can ensure that, although any lineage property in his possession does of course pass

to the matrilineal heir, more than the bare statutory minimum will be received by his children. It is particularly important that a man who has contracted a customary form of marriage should protect his children by this means, for they receive no automatic protection by law and should he die intestate, even his individual property will pass to the matrilineal heir. "Traditionally", the father's matrilineage should assume the responsibility to provide in place of their dead kinsman for the upkeep and welfare of his children, but nevertheless the children are unlikely to receive a very advantageous start in life. The widow has no claim whatsoever and must return to her own kin. If affinal relations have been amicable and the husband's kin are careful of their reputation, she will perhaps be given a token gift or payment. On the other hand, according to rumour it is not unknown for a widow to be stripped of all she has by the deceased husband's descent group.

Matrilineages in Saltpond take a segmentary form, as the above paragraphs indicate. The subject of lineage segmentation is however so extensive that it deserves consideration in itself. This it receives in the section below.

3. Matrilineal Kinship: (a) The matrilineal clan. The matrilineal principle which takes precedence in matters of inheritance is also employed as a means of classifying individuals into discrete kinship units (mbusua; sing: ebusua). Most Fante today follow European non-sociologists and their own pioneer jurist J. Mensah Sarbah[1] in translating the vernacular term as "family"; a few, influenced by early anthropological writings (see p.73, n.1), prefer the English "clan". Neither translation is strictly satisfactory, for the Fante term is freely applied to matrilineal units which differ considerably in composition, function and corporateness. Most of my informants in Saltpond met questions as to the precise delineation of their matrilineal groupings with genuine bewilderment. Nevertheless,

[1] Mensah Sarbah 1897:33.

although it is not always fully perceived by the townspeople themselves, from an analytical viewpoint a system of matrilineal organisation functioning at several levels can be clearly discerned in the town. In order to understand its operation, it will be necessary to examine its mode of segmentation more minutely than do those involved within it.

Problems of this sort have been encountered by previous anthropologists working among Fante and other Akan peoples. Various terminologies have been adopted to describe the pattern of kinship organisation which results[1]. My own usage will broadly follow that of Meyer Fortes, who writes on the Asante[2]. This is not intended to imply that Fante and Asante kinship systems are fully uniform, though there are of course marked similarities between these two peoples.

The first distinction which must be made in any treatment of Fante kinship is that between the localised matrilineal kin unit and the dispersed matrilineal clan. This is recognised by the people of Saltpond themselves, one of whom distinguished the ebusua from the yiiba, the "children delivered from one womb", and explained the difference thus:-

> "The yiiba are all the descendants of a woman.
> So if the relationship is traceable, it is yiiba
> - if it is not traceable, it is only ebusua."

In practice, the term yiiba tends to be applied not so much to the entire localised kin unit as to narrower segments, in emphasis of the closeness of their common descent. However, the distinction refers in principle to the difference between "clan" and "lineage". As Robin Fox has put it[3], within the "lineage", the actual relationship between the members can be demonstrated; within the "clan", it is simply assumed.

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[1] The following, influenced by the classic early work of R.S. Rattray in Asante (1929:62), use the English "clan" coterminously with vernacular usage:- Busia 1951:218; Field 1948:36; Meyerowitz 1951:29. Lystad (1951:94-95) distinguishes a local "lineage" from a wider "sib". Christensen (1954a:19), specifically on the Fante, designates segments of the local "lineage" as "extended families", and refers to the dispersed grouping by the vernacular term abusuakuw.

[2] Fortes 1950:254-261.

[3] Fox 1976:49.

The foundation for clan connections among the Fante is sometimes disputed. Christensen, writing in the 1950s, concluded that ties of clanship were not thought necessarily to imply any real matrilineal kinship, at any rate beyond the Fante area[1]. My own informants, on the other hand, did appear to recognise a common matrilineal relationship, though one of too remote a degree for there to be any prospect that it might be traced. None regarded common clan membership as in itself a bar to marriage (see p.89). This again diverges from Christensen's report that clans were formerly exogamous, a report given him, apparently, by some of the older members of his communities[2]. The present work can offer no valid opinion on whether the rule of exogamy ever attached to clanship in Upper Saltpond, even though it might seem likely that this was once the case. But it is evident, as following paragraphs will show, that in spite of the absence or disintegration of "clan exogamy", the dispersed matrilineal groupings described above have particular significances for the community. It is therefore convenient to retain the term "clan", and it should be noted that exogamy is not regarded here as an essential feature of clanship.

Every Fante is affiliated by birth to the clan of his mother. Each clan is named and has its own symbol, usually in the form of an animal or plant. Broadly speaking, the same clans occur throughout the Fante area. Some slight differences in name and even in symbol occur from town to town, but most Fante would identify any such alternative units as sub-groupings of what are generally recognised as seven most inclusive and quite separate Fante clans. The seven clans as named to me in Upper Saltpond, with some important sub-groupings in the town, are shown on Fig. 3.1 overleaf. These correspond closely with the list given by Christensen[3], which indicates the extent of the agreement among different Fante groups. (Whether this was a fundamental element of "traditional" culture, or whether

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[1] Christensen 1954a:22.
[2] ibid:26.
[3] ibid:21.

Fig.3.1. Clans, sub-clans and clan symbols in Upper Saltpond

Clan	Sub-clan	Clan symbol
1. Aboradze	Tekyina	Plantain
2. Adwenadze		Mudfish
3. Kɔna	Ɔdomna	Buffalo
4. Anana	Eguana, Dihyena	Parrot
5. Nsɔna		Crow
6. Twidan		Leopard ("lion")
7. Atwea		Dog

it reflects the influence of Mensah Sarbah's systematic treatment of the subject in the 19th century[1], cannot now be assessed.) Many of these clans also occur among other Akan peoples. Although in reaching further afield, yet more diversity of name and symbol arises, many Fante would reckon to identify their own unit with a counterpart in other areas[2].

The real usefulness of the clan system for people in Saltpond probably lies in its significance for relationships outside the local community. Clanship provides individuals with potential connections beyond the town, not only in the Fante territories, but more generally throughout the Akan regions. An individual moving to another Akan area expects to be able to secure hospitality and protection from the head of a local lineage of the same clan. Conversely, natives of other towns have been received by Saltpond lineages, being sometimes partially incorporated into the group to the extent that they are commonly, for instance, assessed for funeral dues along with full members. In return, the host lineage is prepared to make arrangements for their own burial should they die while resident in the town. Anyone remaining in such a situation over a very long period might come to be regarded as virtually a full member himself, though he would not be eligible for special offices.

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[1] Mensah Sarbah 1897:4-6

[2] J.B. Christensen (1954a:24-25) has attempted to indicate correspondences between the clan names reported among different Akan peoples.

Within the indigenous population, the clan system operates in such a way that various descent groups in the town - themselves quite distinct but holding a common clan connection - tend to be identified one with another, by outsiders at least. In Upper Town, where the greater part of the research took place, this has had what is probably a fairly unusual result. There has developed in that community a widely-held, but erroneous, view that:

"Every ebusua has a Stool."

This is intended to be understood to mean that each clan provides, or should provide, one of the fully-recognised Upper Town "Stool-Holders". In a rather different sense this remark need not be challenged, for as all townspeople well know, each separate localised matrilineal group of the widest span possesses the "Stool" which is the home of its ancestral spirits. However, certain descent groups have the right to nominate their leader into office within the town as a Sub-Chief (pp.103-104). Their ancestral stools have come to symbolise the leader's special authority, so much so that his office is popularly known by the English term "Stool-Holder", which I too will adopt. Now the distribution of these offices in Upper Town is certainly such that virtually each of the clans has the appearance of being represented by an officially-recognised Stool-Holder. This seems, though, to have been a convenient consequence rather than the result of any deliberate rule of allocation, for the "Crow" people indisputably have no recognised Stool at all and the status of at least one other clan is questionable (see Chapter 4, p.104). In any exact sense, the unit represented by a Stool-Holder is not the clan, but a more narrow matrilineal group which I shall term the "maximal lineage" (see below, pp.77-82). Other similar groups with the same clan affiliation have tended to be identified with the "Stool-Holding" group in popular conceptions, but there is no essential political connection between them.

The clan as such has neither offices nor property vested in it, nor do its members join together for any collective action. In no sense, therefore, can it be described as a "corporate group"[1]. This constitutes a fundamental difference between the matrilineal clan in Saltpond, and the localised matrilineal lineage. The latter provides the next subject for discussion.

3. Matrilineal kinship: (b) The maximal lineage. In each of the Saltpond communities there occur, as implied in the previous section, a number of separate matrilineal groupings (mbusua; sing: ebusua) which are affiliated to one or other of the above Fante clans and which are themselves known by the clan name. (A question as to which ebusua an individual might belong to would thus receive an answer referring equally to the dispersed clan or the localised grouping.) Along with their names, the several discrete units apply to themselves the symbols attaching to their respective clans. Carved and gilded "clan staffs", depicting the different plant and animal symbols (see p.75), are readily on sale throughout this part of Ghana. They are used not in fact by the wholly non-corporate clans, but rather by the restricted localised groupings, who display them on ceremonial occasions. In Upper Saltpond, each of the seven main clans is represented by one such resident unit and in some cases by more than one. Each of these latter is said to be unrelated to the others, or, more accurately, to have no traceable kinship connection with them. Different units of the same name can usually be distinguished by sub-clan (thus: Aboradze Tekyina, the current Chief's lineage, and Aboradze Kusubentsir, a lineage of more recent settlers). However the supplementary terms are rarely used and indeed not universally known, being of interest to the leaders of the units concerned rather than to outsiders. Outsiders tend anyway to identify the separate units of any one clan together.

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[1] c.f. Radcliffe-Brown 1950:41.

Lesser localised matrilineal units which also occur will be described in due course (pp.82-85), but first attention must be given to these groupings of the widest span. They consist, as we have seen, of individuals who according to ideology are connected by lines of matrilineal descent which can be traced. In practice, probably all units include descendants of unrelated people - immigrants and, from previous generations, slaves - who over the generations have been accorded a fictional kinship tie and incorporated into the group; this again in theory, for though their origins should not be mentioned they are remembered, and remain as disqualifications for special offices. One question on which it proved difficult to come to a conclusion when in the field was that of numbers, for the groupings at this level did not appear always to keep accurate track of their members, and nor was there necessarily any agreement as to which sets of people were or were not independent in this sense. However, the leaders' claims that their memberships ran into the hundreds would seem within reason. More disputable is the extent to which these groupings are truly corporate.

Firstly it must be said that whether the members ever come together as a group is debatable, even unlikely. For a start, the original pattern of residence whereby the houses of matrikin were built on adjacent plots of land, so forming discrete residential areas for each of the matrilineal units, has now disintegrated, in Upper Saltpond at least. This has been the result of a shortage of building land in the centre of town, and of deliberate decisions by wealthier individuals to build on plots owned in their own right. These factors have brought about the now more typical pattern, with certain matrikin occupying a cluster of dwellings in the original and central settlement area, but others living in houses away from lineage kin in outlying parts of town.

Turning more specifically to meetings as such, some of my informants maintained that strictly speaking the entire unit ought to come together at the funerals of their members, as Christensen, working in different

Fante towns in the 1950s, reported was precisely the case[1]. In practice this duty, in the Saltpond of 1973, was assumed by a lesser segment (pp.82-84). Ideology further accords that all members should meet together to elect a head, the ebusuapanyin. It would be interesting to know whether full meetings of this kind do indeed take place; no opportunity to confirm the fact directly occurred during the field period. But on the basis of this first criterion of "corporateness" - in the Radcliffe-Brown sense[2] - , the data could begin to cast doubt on the classification of these matrilineal groupings as corporate groups.

Nevertheless, on a different count it can certainly be said that attached to each unit are a number of important offices. The position of "lineage head" (ebusuapanyin), which was mentioned above, is one such. He is said to be chosen at a meeting of the whole group, with each member, whether male or female, having the right to vote. The aim is supposedly to select whichever member may be the most competent to supervise the administrative affairs of the unit, and informants deny that there is any tendency to follow close lines of matrilineal descent. Unfortunately, there being no occasion when such an election occurred, no conclusions could be drawn as to whether or not this is actually so. However, discussions with influential members of different lineages suggested that the affairs of these widest kinship units are often governed by individuals drawn from only a few relatively privileged segments. The power of the lineage head is in any case surpassed by that of the lineage "Stool-Holder".

As mentioned previously, matrilineal units of this widest span put forward from among themselves a leader who is said to "hold" the ancestral stool of the lineage. This "Stool-Holder" has the right - assuming it is recognised by the local community - to sit with the Chief in the town council (Chap.4, pp.103-105). The power of choice in this case lies with the more influential lineage elders; although an incumbent Stool-Holder may

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[1] Christensen 1954a:20.
[2] Radcliffe-Brown 1950:41.

indicate his preference for a successor, the suggestion can be and often is disregarded. The elders look for a man of sound judgement, mature but not too elderly. Other things being equal, however, they prefer to select a candidate who is closely related to the previous holder, and often in fact choose an actual sister's son. Nowadays, Stool-Holders are invariably of relatively high "class" status. (See also Chap.9, pp.294-295.)

The "Stool-Holder" is not necessarily the actual "custodian" of the Stool. This latter position is awarded by the lineage elders to one of their membership, either male or female, who is known to be of some substance. This he needs to keep the Stool provided with the foodstuffs it is thought to require in order to ensure the lineage members' well-being.

Other offices which should be mentioned arise in connection with the asafo company of the town. This is an organisation which formerly engaged in military duties, and which retains important political and religious functions (Chap.4, pp.121-123; Chap.8, pp.236-255). Each of these widest matrilineal units which is sufficiently long-established in the town to have been so acknowledged - and certainly each recognised "Stool-Holding" unit - has vested in it two titles of "captain", one male and one female. Titles of the rank of "captain" pass, I am told, according to the rules of matrilineal descent (i.e. the male titles preferentially to a brother, thence to the sons of the eldest sister, and so on). It can happen that these titles are held by individuals quite young in years, and they do not in themselves provide an entrance to the lineage councils.

The association of offices with a set of people may suggest the existence of a corporate group, but to discover more conclusive evidence one must look for signs of common ownership of property. And with some slight qualification, this evidence can be found in connection with the matrilineal groupings now in question. As the early part of this chapter has shown (pp. 66-68), according to ideology and also to a large part in actuality, the lands in this community are owned by these widest matrilineal

units, the units whose autonomy is symbolised by their possession of an ancestral stool. Thus are the lands often described as "Stool Lands", and although a certain amount has by now been alienated, they are still substantial. The Stool itself constitutes another item of which ownership is vested in the entire group, together with other items of regalia such as the "clan staff". Objects of more common use are also in some cases regarded as group property, and so, too, sometimes are the personal assets of the Stool-Holder.

At this point we approach an ambiguity which in a sense applies even to land, the most basic of the group's resources. What appears in one context as common property can emerge in another as at the disposal of the group leader, in the same way that even land can be alienated by the elders and the proceeds be paid into what is in practice during his tenure the Stool-Holder's own purse. The true corporateness of these matrilineal groupings might therefore be questioned, in spite of their theoretical associations with property, if it could be maintained that all effective property rights lay under the control of a handful of leaders drawn in all probability from a relatively restricted lineage segment.

The situation is, however, clarified by using the concept of property as a cluster of rights which can be distributed[1]. From this perspective, it can appear less inconsistent that the Stool-Holder has the right to alienate lineage lands. The debatable point concerning the precise ownership of the proceeds from the sale of lineage lands may for the moment be left aside. But it is important to remember that each and every individual who can claim affiliation to the lineage by matrilineal descent has ipso facto the right to demand a portion of the land yet inalienated for building or farming. The essential rights which lineage members retain are rights of usufruct. With this understanding, the most inclusive matrilineal unit which is the subject here can clearly be described as "corporate",

[1] c.f. Gluckman 1943:26-33.

if only weakly so. From this point, therefore, it will be termed the "maximal lineage".

Before leaving the topic of this maximal lineage, it may be noted that townspeople's conceptions of the local system of matrilineal organisation seem to diverge quite widely, according to the position in the system of the individuals concerned. Those holding positions of leadership in the maximal lineage generally lay stress on the size, solidarity and influence of the entire unit. Lineage members, on the other hand, often take little interest in it, except in out-of-the-ordinary contexts such as the need to seek patronage, settlement of a difficult dispute, or mediation with the ancestors. It may not be coincidental that this divergence of attitude between leaders and led parallels the differential incidence of rights to lineage property. Moreover, if as would seem likely there has been any weakening in the solidarity of the maximal lineage in Saltpond over past decades, it can perhaps be related to the lack of reliance upon agriculture within the economy. For ordinary members, the lesser matrilineal segments which are the subject of the next section are far more relevant to their day-to-day concerns.

3. Matrilineal Kinship: (c) Lineage segmentation. Matriliny in Saltpond retains what is perhaps its real vigour not at the level of the matrilineal clan or the maximal matrilineal lineage, but at lower levels of segmentation.

Many townspeople, indeed, would define the ebusua or matrilineal group specifically as the group of matrikin who share funeral expenses together. This group is now in Saltpond commonly a lineage segment rather than an entire maximal lineage. This can be observed very clearly where a Saltpond descent group is in fact the distant branch of a maximal lineage located in another town, and where for reasons largely of prestige it maintains relations with its Stool-Holding parent. There are also examples of recognisedly native Saltpond descent groups whose status is sufficiently ambiguous as to raise doubts whether they can validly be categorised

under the heading of "maximal lineage". It appears to be the case that any segment of a maximal lineage may if it so chooses repudiate the assistance of the composite group over its funeral expenses, and that the lesser groups so formed sometimes claim autonomy in their own right. Nevertheless it is difficult to reduplicate ancestral stools and to win recognition in the community at large (although some thoroughly established maximal lineages today are alleged by outsiders to have in the past achieved precisely that). In cases where a funeral-expense-sharing group occurs but where the ancestral stool is held at a higher level of lineage organisation, it may at times be convenient to describe it as the "major lineage".

A major lineage, then, being where it occurs the segment of a larger, named group, probably does not have a name specific to itself, unless that is it can adopt the name of a distant parent for this purpose until it in its turn divides. It employs the symbol of its particular clan for display on ceremonial occasions, either borrowing the "clan staff" (p.77) from the head of the maximal lineage or sometimes owning one itself. The major lineage typically consists of the matrilineal descendants of an ancestress some 2 or 3 generations back and includes perhaps 50 adults. However, numbers vary and some lineages claim double that figure. Even these relatively few members do not occupy a single bounded settlement area, but they are supposed to meet as a group at funerals and on the whole try to do so (on such occasions, representatives of the maximal lineage are usually present, but probably not the group as a whole). The group has its own lineage head (also ebusuapanyin) who again is said to be elected at a meeting of all members, male and female. It seems to be unusual, though, for a major lineage to hold significant amounts of property in common, and this may bear some connection with the ease of fission at this level. It only apparently needs the emergence of sufficient confidence within a lineage segment that it is able to meet its own funeral expenses, before a newly-independent major lineage is proclaimed. Some townspeople assert

that rising prosperity is bringing about a continuing narrowing in the span of the funeral-expense-sharing group.

Thus it may be coming to coalesce with the yet narrower group which some writers have called the "extended family"[1] and which will here be termed the "minor lineage". This typically consists of a group of siblings, possibly quite elderly, together with the sisters' sons and perhaps the sisters' daughters' children. It is likely to include up to 25 or 30 adults. This is the group which is most often referred to as yiiba, the "children brought forth from one womb", although in some contexts the term might be applied to wider lineage segments. Formerly all members might have lived together, but today this is rare, though commonly at least some of them - particularly some female members - will be found living together in the same lineage-owned house. Once, too, the group acted in many ways as an economic unit, dealing collectively with many of its expenses such as providing for the requirements of its deities. The group still remains especially important as a property-holding corporation, for it is at this level that the rules of matrilineal inheritance outlined above (pp. 69-71) make their real effect. The senior male, in most cases, has inherited a house from his father or mother's brother on behalf of his siblings. Rights of usufruct of agricultural land also are transmitted at this level, though this fact is less important in Saltpond that it would be in many other Fante towns. The senior male (or occasionally female), he upon whom the inheritance devolved, is looked upon as the group's own head and is responsible for administration of the joint property, settlement of disputes, and so on. He, too, in my experience was likely to be referred to as ebusuapanyin (or - rarely - as fie panyin: "household head"). In conclusion it should be noted that it is the members of this narrow lineage segment who invariably attend, except with very good reason, the funeral of one of their number.

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[1] Christensen 1954a:20

This then is the structure of the matrilineal lineage system in Saltpond. It remains only to add that many of the townspeople are highly critical of its working, especially under modern conditions. Thus the saying:

> "The ebusua is like a forest: if you stand afar off, it seems as all one; but if you approach it, you see that each single tree has its own place."

Critics allege that lineages are neglecting their customary responsibility to provide for members who fall upon hard times. It is no use now, they say, to look beyond a sibling for assistance. Moreover, continue the more cynical, a mother's brother only takes an interest in you once you are dead, when the descent group can hope to inherit property from you.

There is indeed much to suggest that a definite trend towards a weakening of lineage ties has been taking place. There seems to have been a decided narrowing of both the funeral-expense-sharing and the house-owning lineage segments. There has also, by some accounts, been a rise in the importance of the set of close kin called the tsir-ho-nam (literally: the "skin of the head"), who include one's own parents, siblings and children, and who are responsible - with the addition of a woman's husband - for the settlement of one's debts at death. Groups of full siblings within the lineage are increasingly coming to enjoy a financial interest common and special to themselves, in their expectation of an inheritance from their father. Furthermore, matrilineal groups at every level of segmentation, with the possible exception of the very lowest, are coming to be cross-cut by the newly emerging "class" cleavages based on economic differentiation.

These constrictions of matrilineal organisation are among the developments which Mary Douglas acknowledges, in her discussion of the future of matriliny[1], to be consequent upon economic advance. It will perhaps be asked whether changes of this kind amount to a disintegration of the "traditional" matrilineal organisation. However, matrilineages in Saltpond,

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[1] Douglas 1969:121-124.

though perhaps narrowing in span, continue to hold together at the levels at which they operate as house-owning and to an extent as land-owning corporations. Thus the answer must be that, for the present at least, matriliny survives.

A later section of this chapter (pp. 90-94) will consider whether, alongside this, the "patrilineal" principle is coming to be sufficiently emphasised - or indeed has always been so emphasised - that the system of kinship organisation should be taken for one of "double descent". First, though, for the sake of completeness, there will be a brief discussion of forms and procedures of marriage.

4. Marriage and Affines. Within "traditional" Fante cultures, there once obtained a number of customary forms of marriage, most of which had lost their significance in Saltpond by 1973 (they can be discovered by reference to previous writers[1]). The truly relevant distinction was then between "customary marriage" as such, and a "statutory marriage" solemnised by either church or civil authorities. The latter was so rare locally as to warrant no further concern.

Customary arrangements, in the event of a man's first marriage, are settled by the groom's father and by the father and lineage of the girl. The father, though not a member of the child's own matrilineage, is the person responsible for his or her upkeep until full adulthood is attained at the time of marriage (see pp. 90-91). Nowadays young people have won considerable freedom in the selection of their spouse, but most relatives insist on their continued right to investigate the background of their child's choice and to give approval. Customary marriage is contracted by a series of payments made to the girl's matrilineage. These are provided by the groom's father for a man's first marriage, and subsequently by the man himself. I never witnessed such transactions myself, but was told that, following the libations provided by the groom's party at their preliminary

[1] e.g. Christensen 1954a:57-58.

formal enquiry, the marriage payments in Saltpond currently consisted of an initial "knocking fee" (abomubɔdze) of "five guineas" (¢10.50, or £3-50 sterling), a subsequent donation of "head rum" (tsinsa) of ¢25 (£8-33 sterling), and a gift to the bride (akyɛdze) amounting to anything between ¢100 and ¢200 (£33-33 to £66-67). The latter is intended to provide for the bride's personal needs. According to my Saltpond informants, it is the payment of "head rum" which completes the contract. This is distributed in small amounts to members of the girl's lineage. Following its receipt, many fathers allow their daughter to move into the husband's house, though some insist on the further formality of an additional church blessing.

A blessing in church does not rank as a church wedding as such, for this is a more elaborate affair from which most people in Saltpond, even conscientious Christians, are deterred by reasons of the expense. But only a marriage contracted in church, or the rare civil marriage, brings with it a marriage certificate and the protection of the law for the "wedded" wife and her children (see above, pp. 71-72). Nevertheless, even where there is a church wedding, the customary transactions are completed first. The church service is treated as a final consecration, and thus parents whose children have married overseas have been known to refuse to recognise the match until the customary rites have been observed. This is reasonable by local standards, for it is only by the transfer of the customary marriage payments - particularly of the "head rum" - that the important affinal relationships between the two sets of kin are created.

These affinal relationships are invariably defined by local people in terms of the duties which they impose in the event of a death, duties which are assumed immediately upon payment of "head rum". They are likely to come into effect for the first time at the death of the mother or father of one of the spouses, most especially at the commemorative rites which follow some time after the actual burial. At that time, the bereaved partner must be dressed in fine clothes for the occasion by the other,

who must also make a contribution towards the expenses of the funeral to the dead parent's matrilineage. (Incidentally, cynics remark that a wife's contribution at the funeral of her husband's parents is usually in fact financed by the husband himself, women generally having few savings and no help being due to her from her matrilineage.) This contribution is regarded as being different in kind from those made by sympathisers in general, who according to ideology offer their gift from the goodness of their own hearts rather than by constraint.

Another commitment of affinal relationships, perhaps one of the most fundamental, is the requirement that the children of a marriage should be responsible for providing their father's coffin. This involves expenditure at a level anywhere between ¢200 and ¢600 (£67 to £200 sterling), depending on the deceased's status and the children's resources. If the children are still too young to provide this sum themselves, responsibility rests with their own (and thus their mother's) minor lineage. In either case, they are accompanied at the commemorative funeral rites by their minor lineage. The payment for the coffin is passed ceremonially to their dead father's lineage by (usually) their own lineage head, who is in all probability their mother's brother and actual brother-in-law to the deceased. This transfer, conducted with elaborate ceremony, constitutes the central part of the customary funeral rites, and is conceived as reciprocal to the former and opposite transfer of the marriage payments and to the costs incurred by the father in the upkeep and education of the children.

These ceremonial exchanges are the idiom by which affinal relationships are expressed, but they are primarily symbolic in character. The real quality of the affinal relationship lies in the link which it forges between different matrilineal groups, a link which offers scope for alliances which may be of use in political strategising. These alliances can be continued over several generations by adhering to the customarily preferred cross-cousin marriage.

In my experience in Saltpond in 1973, the ideal of matriclan exogamy, which has been reported as being formerly observed by the Fante[1], no longer held. Even the maximal matrilineage was not strictly exogamous. Nowadays a practice is in force under which individuals are forbidden to marry if they share common descent, matrilineal or patrilineal, from an ancestor within 3 generations of themselves. This effectively bars members of the same minor lineage and of a corresponding set of relatives in the male line.

Cross-cousin marriage, however, whether with a father's sister's or a mother's brother's child, is permitted. Formerly it was even apparently preferred. This had the advantage, as explained by a number of writers on Akan peoples[2], that the property passing from a man to his matrilineal heir would benefit some of his own children or grandchildren. It also helped to resolve some of the problems of residence imposed by a system of matrilineal descent. Even where the relationship was classificatory, the marriage repeated previous alliances, and thus maintained the convergence of interest already established between the respective lineages. Now that young people are allowed more freedom in the choice of spouse, cross-cousin marriage is becoming more rare, but it can commonly be found to have occurred among those of more mature years. In the case of Stool-Holding and Chiefly lineages, successive marriages of this type can often be traced for several generations, these marriages having effectively established treaties of friendship between different towns both within and among the various Fante states.

Nowadays, while former preferences have not been entirely abandoned, the primary concern is that one should not marry below one's own social "class". A woman in such a case would find her husband unable to maintain her or educate her children in a manner which she ought to expect. A man in the same position would meet his end with his children's lineage unable to buy him in the style befitting his status.

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[1] e.g. Christensen 1954a:26,66.
[2] Fortes 1950:281; Rattray 1927:317-326; Christensen 1954a:51.

Customary Fante marriage rules permit polygyny, and this is still practised in the town. However, it appears to be declining, and not only among the circles governed by the prohibitions imposed by many of the churches. The growing cost of raising a family is becoming too great a burden for most men to undertake several times over. On the other hand, many men, including church members, pursue open and long-standing relationships with more than one woman. They know well that they may "take only one wife to the church door", but they contribute towards the upkeep of the other while the relationship lasts, and if they are dutiful they recognise and support any children. But, children in this position may find themselves in difficulties, especially after their father's death, though in recent years there has been legal provision for these relationships to be registered with the civil authorities so that the children may keep some claim in the father's estate.

Alternatively, in a situation where formerly a second wife might have been married polygynously, a previous marriage can be dissolved and a new monogamous marriage be contracted. Divorce is easy, except in the case of a statutory marriage when it requires a costly passage through the courts. More than this, divorce is common. Few people, probably, other than those "wedded" in church, maintain a single lifetime union.

5. Paternal Rights and Duties, and the Question of "Double Descent". Earlier in this chapter, it was found that, under the descent system prevailing in Saltpond at present, the matrilineal principle which was "traditionally" pervasive still receives a significant emphasis. Nevertheless, as the preceding discussion of marital relationships has begun to show, the father plays a central role with respect to his own children.

This argument can be taken further. For a start, the father is the one who names the child. A child whose paternity remains thus unrecognised grows up to be to an extent dishonoured, and, most likely, to be disadvantaged as well, for it is also the father's responsibility to support

the child and to provide for his future by financing his education. Residence patterns in Saltpond are fluid, as among all the Akan peoples, and a husband and wife may not actually cohabit, but the father has the right, should he wish, to take his children to his own house once they have reached the age of 8 or 10, whether or not the marriage remains in being. At much this age he may perhaps take his son to join for the first time in the activities of his asafo company, the once military association or "regiment" of Fante menfolk, membership in which is transmitted patrilineally (see Chap.4, pp.109-123). At a later stage, as mentioned above, the father is responsible for the payments for the son's first marriage, by which the son enters into full maturity and independence.

Responsibility subsequently devolves upon the son to support his father in his old age, and finally to provide his father's coffin at a cost commensurate with his father's earlier outlay upon himself. Even after the father's death, the son keeps what might be considered a residual claim to the resources of his father's matrilineage, in that he will in all probability be allowed to farm on lineage land or to continue living in a lineage house. However, these are rights which he is generally not able to transmit to his own children. The son also has a particular claim in the father's estate, a claim which, as shown previously (pp. 71-72), can easily become a subject of dispute with the matrilineage. Nevertheless, the practice whereby a man may bequeath his individually-acquired assets freely to his own children is long-established, and the question whether it constitutes a later development from "traditional" custom is now largely irrelevant[1]. The practice has, however, received more and more support from statutory law from the 19th century onwards (see pp. 71-72), and is increasingly followed.

The settlement of property by fathers upon sons, together with their usual attempt to secure for their sons an education at least as good as their own, has had the result that "class" status tends to be transmitted

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[1] Patrilineal inheritance of property was evident in the coastal Fante towns by the early 1800s (see Priestley 1969:185).

in the male line. It is by this mechanism, over and above the effect of individual achievement, that matrilineal groups have come to be cross-cut by "class" cleavages.

Modifications in matrilineal systems such as those described in the previous paragraphs have in the past lent themselves to one of two interpretations. The particular stand which is taken depends in large part on whether the practices concerned are regarded as "traditional" customs or as "modern" developments. Thus, as Mary Douglas points out, they are taken by some writers as evidence for the inevitable eventual "doom" of matrilineal organisation as such. This point, which has been touched upon previously (pp. 65-66), will be referred to again. Other commentators have conversely cited practices of this kind to support the view that the descent system in question is not "matrilineal" at all but rather "double unilineal" - either that "traditionally" it was always so, or that it is becoming so under the impact of "modern" socioeconomic change.

Accordingly the anthropologist J.B. Christensen, following the approach of G.P. Murdock[1], finds that there was "traditionally" among the Fante a system of "double descent"[2]. In further support of his thesis, Christensen refers to the importance of the political function of the patrilineally-recruited asafo companies[3]. He also cites "traditional" Fante belief in the egyabosom, the "father's deity", which, somewhat similar to the ntoro of the culturally-related Asante, was apparently transmitted through the male line[4]. There once occurred among the Fante, apparently, so-called "egyabosom groupings" - corresponding to other Akan ntoro groupings - which were made up of individuals who worshipped the same "father's deity"[5]. Both these and the military asafo companies are regarded by Christensen as

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[1] Murdock 1940:557-558
[2] Christensen 1954a:3-5,97-106,128-129
[3] ibid:128
[4] Christensen 1954a:77-89; Herskovits 1937:287-296; Rattray 1923:43-52
[5] Christensen 1954a:88.

providing a "patrilineal system" alongside the long-acknowledged matrilineal organisation.

Christensen's propositions were however refuted by Jack Goody in his paper of 1961 dealing with systems of double descent. In this, Goody rightly pointed out that:

> "Part of the evidence submitted by Christensen shows, not the strength of the patrilineal descent group, but rather the importance of the father role, which is a very different question ...[1]."

Goody went on to make the apt comment that

> "... the Fanti regiments were morphologically different from, say, the Ashanti clans. For in the latter case the 'unilineal' principle is not merely a criterion of eligibility to the social group, but is also the means by which the personnel of the group reckon relationships among themselves. Each member of an Ashanti clan is related unilineally to every other member, not only to the single person whom he replaces socially. In the Fanti case we may speak of patrifilial recruitment, in the Ashanti of unilineal descent[2]."

He judged, further, that Ashanti ntoro groupings (taken for discussion in preference to their less well documented Fante counterparts) did not constitute "corporate groups", repeating earlier words of Meyer Fortes to the effect that:

> "... there is no corporate organization based on the father's line, nor are jural or political rights (such as rights of inheritance) or duties derived from paternal descent[3]."

Christensen himself admits that the Fante "father's deity" groupings were not corporate - or, as he says, "formalized" - groups, they having no recognised leadership or collective responsibility[4].

Goody concluded that systems such as those of the Fante and Asante could not validly be classified under the heading "double descent"[5], it being of course the definition of the concept itself in dispute between

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[1] Goody 1961b:9
[2] ibid:8
[3] Fortes 1950:267; Goody 1961b:10
[4] Christensen 1954a:87
[5] Goody 1961b:11.

himself and those of the Murdock school. Goody's position is the one which is regarded in the present work as being the more acceptable.

But even if Goody's standpoint is accepted, there remains a further consideration which he did not cover, for a number of students of the Fante (and indeed of other Akan peoples) have remarked upon a growing emphasis on "patrilineal descent" under the impact of Western culture. This is said to manifest itself in particular in the increasing recognition of the male line in matters of inheritance[1], a practice which my own research confirmed. One writer has additionally discerned the emergence of some sense of group consciousness among persons with common patrilineal connections in the more Western-influenced circles of the coastal Fante town of Anomabu[2]. However, if this is indeed the case in Anomabu, it did not appear to be so in Saltpond. Here, no suggestions of an ideology of patrilineal descent were encountered, other than a simple awareness that there existed numbers of individuals with common surnames between whom a kin relationship through males might be traceable. In the absence of any such ideology, it is difficult, despite the associations with property, to sustain an argument in favour of the existence of a "patrilineal" corporate descent group.

Thus the Saltpond material does not support the view that the Fante exhibit, or once exhibited, a system of "double descent". The descent system of Saltpond, both formerly and currently, is best regarded as one which is not "double unilineal" but simply "matrilineal".

6. Kinship and Religion in Saltpond. The present chapter has concluded that the descent system operating in Saltpond at present should be typified as matrilineal. Even though certain modifications in the practice of matriliny are acknowledged to have taken place, matrilineal organisation as such is judged to have survived the effect of the socioeconomic changes which have occurred until now.

This does not necessarily mean that it will survive indefinitely. In

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[1] e.g. Christensen 1954a:132; Priestley 1969:182-187; Cardinall 1931:84.
[2] Priestley 1969:182-183.

the paper referred to at the beginning of this chapter, Mary Douglas asks again the cogent question of whether matriliny is indeed compatible with a "modern" market economy. Under these conditions, she points out, differential access to wealth and the resulting disparity of income may be expected to bring about a tendency for people to put responsibility to near kin before responsibility to more distant matrilineal relatives[1]. She herself suggests, however, that such a development may be made unnecessary where a market economy is undergoing expansion; material resources are then so abundant that the conflicting demands of children and matrilineage can be nicely balanced[2]. In summing up, she puts forward the further idea that in "modern" industrial Africa there may come to be occupational niches where matrilineal organisation can continue to flourish; merchant banking, she proposes for instance, might favour the continuance of matriliny, whereas professional occupations allowing for little accumulation of property would not[3].

Considerably more work needs to be done on this subject before hard and fast conclusions can be arrived at. However, there is one characteristic which is noteworthy of the Saltpond people who have derived most gain from the "modern" economy. Among these, the individuals who are most closely involved in the working of the matrilineal system are not the professional men - who are largely absent from town - but the successful "business-men" or traders. The topic clearly deserves more concerted investigation.

For the moment, the context whereby matrilineal groups in Saltpond are cross-cut by "class" cleavages rooted in economic differentiation provides the focus for the study which follows. It will be shown in later chapters that cleavages of class and kinship are reflected in religious ideology. Ancestral cult organisation has for practical reasons been excluded from the field of this study, but the part of kinship in determining religious

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[1] [2] Douglas 1969:121-122,130
[2] [3] ibid:130-132
[3] ibid:133.

affiliations of other persuasions will be explored. There will subsequently be a discussion of the connection between matrilineal organisation and the witchcraft beliefs which, as shown later (Chap.9, pp.291-308), have a highly significant place in the cosmological system.

Before these questions are dealt with, however, it will be useful in Chapter 4 to look at the "traditional" political institutions of Saltpond, which rest largely upon matrilineal kinship.

Chapter 4. TRADITIONAL POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS AND MODERN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Traditional political institutions can always be expected to be intimately connected with traditional forms of religious belief and organisation. Connections of this kind have indeed been discerned by previous students of Akan peoples[1]. Now, the place of "traditional" ritual within contemporary religious practice in the town of Saltpond is to make up an important part of the discussion in later chapters (see especially Chap.7, pp.227-233; Chap.8, pp.241-255). Here, therefore, it will be helpful to describe the political structures of the town which may also, for want of a better term, be called "traditional".

It is often assumed by observers nowadays that these forms of organisation in Ghana are becoming defunct. They have, undoubtedly, been divested of much of the power which was formerly bound up in them. Nevertheless, it is arguable that they have not yet entirely lost their effectiveness. The present chapter, in giving an indication of the extent to which the "traditional" political institutions have changed from their precolonial forms, will also attempt to evaluate their practical importance under contemporary circumstances.

The chapter will begin with a survey of the relations which formerly existed between the different Fante states, and will continue with a description of the "traditional" organisation of the State of Nkusukum, to which Saltpond belongs. It will then analyse the organisation of the Saltpond community of Upper Town, upon which the research is mainly focused. In this context, the chapter will deal with the Chief and the so-called "Stool-Holders", with the "Queen Mother", and with the once military asafo company. Each of these will be shown to have, even today, some definite local political functions. Subsequently, it will be shown

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[1] e.g. Rattray 1929:v-vi,399-405; Busia 1951:26-37.

how "traditional" political institutions are still playing a part in "modern" local government.

1. The Fante States. As mentioned in Chapter 1 (p. 17), the Fante peoples have never been organised effectively as a single political entity. They have rather consisted, since their dispersal from the reputed early settlement at Mankesim, of a number of independent chiefdoms or states (aman; sing: ɔman) which were intermittently in alliance or dispute one with another. A list of the various states recognised by each other as Fante has been compiled by J.B. Christensen[1]. Christensen has further drawn attention to a mistaken tendency of outsiders, including government, to include as Fante other linguistically similar Akan states from surrounding territories. This, he comments, has resulted in over-enumeration of Fante in some of the censuses[2].

During this present research, it was apparent that different criteria could be adopted for defining the Fante ethnic group in different contexts. Nevertheless, "true" Fante informants usually insisted upon the special claims of their own states, by virtue of the supposed descent of their populations from the inhabitants of the mythical ancestral home of Tekyiman in the north, just as they also insisted upon which other peoples should be excluded. Even with exclusions of this kind, Christensen's list shows nearly 20 separate Fante states, whose population in 1948, Fante plus immigrant, he calculated at some 200,000. In 1960, the last date for which figures are available, the Fante population throughout Ghana was given as 708,470[3].

Many of my own informants from Saltpond regarded 5 "original" Fante states as holding a special position among the rest, naming these most commonly as Mankesim, Abura, Ekumfi, Nkusukum, and Abeadze (see map, Fig.1.1, p. 11). Others put the number at 7, including also Anomabu and

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[1] Christensen 1954a:14
[2] ibid:8,14
[3] Census of Ghana 1960, Special Report E:1.

Kwaman. The list shows a measure of agreement with histories published by other writers[1], but also reveals differences of detail. This fact is hardly surprising in view of acknowledgements by some of my sources that their remarks referred as much to the prestige accorded to or claimed by the states they mentioned, as to their antiquity. Indeed, there was not always agreement over precisely which states should be mentioned in this connection. Some informants apparently confused the original circle of Fante states with those falling within the present-day local authority boundary (c.f. p. 127), others with the members of the 19th century Fante Confederation. Almost all informants knew that this latter organisation once united the Fante peoples from the headquarters of Mankesim, but few could give an accurate account of its history or organisation.

The short-lived Fante Confederation in fact arose in 1868 within a context of increasing tension between the coastal peoples and the encroaching British rulers, and in the face of the ever then present Asante threat[2]. Initially it took the form of a loose military alliance of the Fante states, together with other neighbouring non-Fante peoples such as the Gomoa, Assin, Denkyira, and Wassaw. Fante states included all those which were named in the previous paragraph, with the addition of Komenda and other smaller groups. Oguaa, the relatively young state whose capital is at Cape Coast, remained overtly neutral. Beyond the purely military aims of the Confederation, the participants agreed that a Confederation Council consisting of Paramounts and Chiefs from the respective states should meet at Mankesim, and that a court should be set up with jurisdiction covering the combined territories. These decisions were put into effect, but the efficiency of the Confederation was always

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[1] e.g. Christensen 1954a:7-12; but see also Meyerowitz 1952:81-83; Ellis 1893:37-38, 108-109.

[2] For discussions of the formation and disintegration of the Fante Confederation, see:- Claridge 1915, vol.1:567-575,614-625; Ward 1948:233-234,246-258; Kimble 1963:222-261; Agbodeka 1971:15-33; Boahen 1975:48-56.

impaired because it could not reach final agreement as to who should be its leader. The Paramount Chief of Mankesim, even after the destruction of the sacred grove of the nananom pɔw (Chap.5, pp.135-136), was held to possess a degree of overall ritual authority by virtue of the special place of Mankesim in Fante history, but the Paramount of Abura controlled the greater secular power.

In 1871 the Confederation took on something of a new character, with now a purely Fante membership, to become among other things expressly a movement for internal self-government. However, the British authorities, who had all along regarded it with disfavour, refused to grant it recognition. In 1873 it disintegrated under the pressure of military failure, financial collapse, and (apparently) British subversion.

The Fante Confederation is significant because it constituted the only organised drive of the Fante towards unification. Since its dissolution, the Fante states, though subsequently grouped together for the purposes of local government (see p. 127), have never been able to speak with one voice.

2. Nkusukum State. The two settlements of Saltpond both belong to the Fante state of Nkusukum, the capital of which is at Yamoransa, 15 miles to the west along the road to Cape Coast. There the Paramount Chief (omanhen) has his residence. The present Nkusukum territories are not contiguous, Saltpond and some few surrounding villages occupying an outpost of the state, separated from the other body of land by the once highly influential maritime state of Anomabu. Saltpond is in fact geographically nearer to two other important state capitals than it is to its own capital of Yamoransa, for both Anomabu and Mankesim are only some 7 miles distant, to the west and north respectively. This has perhaps been a prime factor influencing the quality of its relations with its own Paramount Chief (see p. 102).

The political structure of Nkusukum State is essentially another variant of the general Akan pattern of organisation. This typically comprises a number of internally autonomous chiefdoms or divisions (also termed, like the wider unit, singly as ɔman), each of which is subject to its own ruler. The latter ranks either as ɔhen (lit: "ruler"), which will be translated here simply as "Chief", or else as ɔdzekurow (lit: "holder of the town"). An ɔdzekurow is himself subordinate to an ɔhen, and therefore best described as a "Sub-Chief". In the Fante states, settlements of a certain prominence have recognition as such by virtue of their duty and privilege of mustering one of the state military asafo companies, which is officially led by the Chief or Sub-Chief of that place. Each company is individually named and in former days had its own special duties in time of war. Since colonial times, the various companies of each state have also been numbered.

Thus in Nkusukum, the asafo company of Yamoransa, the capital, is the annkɔbea company ("those who don't go anywhere"). This, exceptionally, is un-numbered. The annkɔbea company acted as the Paramount Chief's bodyguard, and had the duty when they went into battle of standing with him for his protection. Likewise at Yamoransa, there should be an office-holder with the title of Gyasehen, ranking as an ɔhen (Chief), whose responsibilities would include the management of state business on behalf of the Paramount, and supervision of the affairs of the annkɔbea company. However, at the time of this research the office was said to be vacant.

The No. 1, 2, and 3 asafo companies of Nkusukum State are all located in Saltpond. No.1 Company, the twafo company of Nkusukum (twafo: "those who take the lead"), has as its formal head the Chief (ɔhen) of Upper Town. The Chief holds the title of Twafohen in the Nkusukum hierarchy. No.1 Company formerly had the duty to go before the Paramount into battle. Consequently, today, it claims the right to lead his procession on

ceremonial occasions, though this was not acutally being exercised at the time of the field research since the Chief of Upper Town was then in dispute with his superior (see Chap.8, pp.283-284).

No.2 Company, the adantse company, is based in Low Town under the Chief (ɔhen) of Nankesedo, and No.3 Company, the akɔmfodze company, is located in a particular quarter of Upper Town known as Eguabadu (see map, Fig.2.1, p. 37). This latter group is led by a title-holder who is said by many to rank as a Sub-Chief (ɔdzekurow) under the Chief of Upper Town (hence the name of that part of Saltpond, meaning "On the small Stool"). He has for some time, however, apparently been claiming recognition as a Chief in his own right.

3. Political Communities in Saltpond; the Political Organisation of Upper Town. The modern town of Saltpond is held by most parties to consist of two separate "divisions" of Nkusukum State, one the original habitation of Low Town or Nankesedo, and the other the later settlement of Upper Town, otherwise Akyemfo. Each of these comes under its respective Chief (ɔhen). The division is the level at which perhaps the most intensive political interaction within the "traditional" Saltpond system occurs, and it will therefore be this unit which is regarded here as the immediate political community. The internal political organisation of the division will be shown below with reference primarily to Upper Town, or more specifically to the twafo division comprised in No.1 asafo company. The twafo division, "that which takes the lead", is sometimes said further to "hold the keys of Nkusukum State", keys being featured for this reason upon the Chief's Staff of State and on certain asafo regalia. It was within this division that the greater part of the research was carried out. Nevertheless, brief indication will be added of important differences which are to be found in the political structure of Low Town.

The discussion begins by considering the significance in Upper Saltpond of that most central of Akan political institutions, namely, the "Stool".

3(a) The Stools and the Chiefs. There is a quarter of Upper Saltpond at the very centre of the town known as Ekuadaa (see map, fig.2.1, p. 37). This name means, as many of the local people say, "Eku's resting-place". Such informants then relate that long ago a man called Eku led his dependants to Saltpond and settled at this very site, and that his descendants today form the Eguana maximal matrilineage now designated as "Parrot No.2". Actual lineage members claim that Eku and his kinsfolk - whom he had supposedly led "from Mankesim" - were one of the original two lineages to settle in Upper Town. They continue the story to tell how Eku welcomed into his house one Kuranchi, who, though unrelated, was of the same matriclan. Subsequently, they say, when Eku once had to leave town, Kuranchi "stole the keys with which he had been entrusted" and moved out to live in the area of town now known as Kuranchikrom ("Kuranchi's town"). Kuranchi's own descendants are today the Eguana No.1 lineage.

Others would have it alternatively that the first Fante people to migrate to Upper Town were led by Kuranchi himself, who, "bringing his Stool with him", became the "first" Chief in Upper Town. These latter remark that the two present Eguana lineages were initially one, but that they divided after a quarrel.

A small minority of townspeople give an entirely different emphasis to these supposed early events, saying that the first Fante settlers at Upper Town were made up of several different groups. In their view, the original settlement was really called ékuw ádaa, "the resting-place of the groups". These tales, while not necessarily representing strict historical accuracy, all reflect facets of present-day political organisation in Upper Town.

Thus in Upper Saltpond today the leaders of certain of the maximal matrilineages, those sometimes said to have "brought a Stool with them from Tekyiman", are accorded recognition as "Stool-Holders" and sit with the Chief in his Council. They are known in Fante, like the ancestors,

as nananom ("grandfathers"). It was explained in Chapter 3 (pp. 66-67, 79-80) that every maximal lineage in the town possesses a Stool, dedicated to the memory of its founding ancestor, in which the spirit of the founder is thought to reside. Not every matrilineage with an ancestral stool, however, has a "Stool-Holder" who is recognised by the community as a whole.

Reports from townspeople as to the number of officially-recognised Stool-Holders vary. However, the better-informed seem to agree that there were once ten "Stools" in the community, but that some have since been "abolished". This means, of course, that the lineages concerned have been divested of their titled status within the town, and not that their own ancestral stools have been destroyed. Following from this, it sometimes appears that certain of the dispossessed lineages have continued to assert a claim to their former titles, and that this is one reason for the discrepancies surrounding this subject. But to continue, most informants agree that there are currently seven recognised Stool-Holders in Upper Town, of whom the Chief himself is one, and the male Stool-Holder of the Queen Mother's lineage a second.

The fact that the distribution of these Stools among the Upper Town matrilineages is such that almost all the seven Fante matriclans are so represented (see Chap.3, pp. 74-76), is probably fortuitous. This is clear from the fact that there are still two separate Eguana (Parrot) Stools, whereas the Nsɔna (Crow) lineage has none and apparently never has had. At the time of the research, by most accounts, there were five Stool-Holders who met with the Chief, a Stool-Holder himself, in his Council. (The seventh, in 1973, was reputedly too infirm to take any active part in the affairs of the town.) The Chief claims, frequently and publicly, to see his position as simply that of primus inter pares.

The Chief's Council, which receives statutory support (see pp. 124-125), has the right to impose by-laws of local significance. During the field research, for instance, following a near accident on the beach, it decreed

that children should no longer swim in the surf. It also has a limited power to enforce its decisions. Persons who infringe these can be brought for judgement before the Council itself, to which, if found guilty, they may be required to pay a fine. (Cases of this kind occurred during the field period.) Thus the Chief and his Council have definite, if local, political functions.

Supporters of the Chief of Upper Town in 1973 used to maintain that his Aboradze Tekyina lineage had the right always to provide the Ohen. They would also explain that the selection procedure is rather different from that for any other Stool-Holder (c.f. Chap.3, pp. 79-80). By their account, although the lineage itself makes a preliminary choice of two suitable candidates from among its membership, the final decision is made by the officially-recognised Stool-Holders, acting in the role of "King-Makers". The successor also apparently requires the approval of the Queen Mother and the acquiescence of Upper Town's No.1 "military" asafo company, the channel for the voice of the townspeople (pp. 112,123). The aim is said to be to find the most suitable successor, one of sound judgement and at least reasonable means, a man neither immature nor elderly and showing neither physical deformity nor bodily scar. Other things being equal, however, the King-Makers seem often to follow close lines of matri-lineal descent. Like the other Stool-Holders, a Chief is now, invariably, relatively high in "class" status.

This is not the only version of the succession procedure to be held in the town. Thus, other factions allege that the Stool-Holders-and-King-Makers possess the right to elevate any of the other Stool-Holding lineages in order to secure the best possible new Chief. They quote in justification the old saying that:

"People serve the Sceptre, not the Stool,"

and interpret this to the effect that the Staff of State can be transferred freely from one lineage to another. The saying is cited, on occasion, in

support of claims to the Chiefship from candidates belonging to lineages other than that of the current Chief.

It does indeed appear to be the case, although reports as to the history are shadowy, that the office of Chief has not always been confined to the one Upper Town lineage. The Chiefship apparently came to the present Aboradze Tekyina lineage only with the immediate predecessor of the man who held it in 1973. This was in about 1969. Previously, the office seems to have been claimed by the Stool-Holder of the Eguana No.1 lineage, that which springs from the renowned - or notorious - Kuranchi. The claimant however was never installed, possibly because, as some say, he could not win the support of the asafo company, whose duty this is. For many years, therefore, the affairs of the town were managed by a "regent", a man who was, as a native of a distant town, not involved personally in local issues. Thus, in 1973, the position seemed to be that, while the current regime intended that the status quo should remain, the situation could easily have been changed were opinions to alter.

It is also possible, incidentally, for a Chief to be deposed if he should come to lose support in the town. The procedure for deposition, like that of selection, apparently requires the agreement of the King-Makers, the Queen Mother, and the asafo company.

This section has described the basic pattern of interaction of Chieftaincy and Stool in Upper Town, but it is necessary for the sake of completeness to mention two further office-holders who are not normally numbered among the Upper Town Stool-Holders. The first of these, as mentioned previously (p. 102), is considered by followers of the Chief of Upper Town to rank as Sub-Chief (adzekurow) and as such to be formally subordinate to him, an evaluation which is currently the subject of some disputation; his jurisdiction covers the quarter of the town known as Eguabadu (lit: "on the small Stool"). The second, the serki zongo, the political head of the northerners in their own quarter of Upper Town,

likewise ranks as a Sub-Chief.

Finally, it should be noted that all indications from Lower Saltpond suggest that the Chiefship there has always been held by a single lineage.

3(b) The Queen Mother of Upper Saltpond. The next person in precedence after the Chief, whose position has just been described, is the female office-holder referred to as the "Queen Mother". This term is the somewhat misleading translation historically given to the female title, occurring widely among Akan peoples, which is called in Twi ɔhemmaa. The prestige and influence accorded by the Akan to these sometimes very formidable ladies has long been made known by R.S. Rattray[1].

In Asante, where Rattray predominantly worked, the title was held by a female member of the Chief's own matrilineage, sometimes even by his own sister[2]. J.B. Christensen, too, whose researches among the Fante covered a wider area than that dealt with here, has reported that this would normally be the case with respect to these latter peoples[3]. In the Fante town of Upper Saltpond, however, the situation is different. While the Chiefship itself seems to have moved among several different maximal matrilineages, the office of Queen Mother (usual Fante: ɔhembaa; but in Saltpond, more widely: ɔbaahema) has, it would appear, always been vested in the Eguana (Parrot) No.2 lineage descended from the famous early settler, Eku. The Queen Mother, like the Chief, is said to occupy a "Stool", though her maximal lineage is also represented by a male "Stool-Holder" like any other.

The current Queen Mother, who was installed in September 1972, claims to be the third in line, and a sister's daughter of her predecessor. The first incumbent held office during the 19th century, and the second from 1883 to 1914. After this, the title was left vacant for the intervening near 60 years, reputedly out of courtesy to the Paramount Chief

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[1] Rattray 1923:81-85;1929:88.
[2] Rattray 1923:82n; Busia 1951:19.
[3] Christensen 1954a:36.

at Yamoransa, where likewise the previous Queen Mother had not been replaced. This fact, certainly, is consistent with Christensen's remark in the 1950s that these offices were remaining unfilled (indeed, he concluded that the position of Queen Mother was considered less important by the Fante than by other Akan peoples)[1]. However, in Saltpond in 1972, at apparently very much the same time as the acceding Chief was being selected by the King-Makers, the Eguana No.2 lineage re-claimed its right to put forward the Queen Mother of the town. Their claim was allowed, it being perhaps not coincidence that the newly-selected Chief was himself married into that same lineage.

"Traditionally", there has been no special ritual for the installation of an Upper Town Queen Mother. She was instead, it is said, simply named at the annual Town Festival (Chap.8, pp.250-252). In this instance, though, and for the first time, she was reputedly given the full rights befitting a Chief (Chap.8, pp.274-276), actually passing through the ceremony jointly with the new male Chief.

The Queen Mother's status within the town is such that she can act for the Chief in his absence, especially representing him on ceremonial occasions. She goes to these surrounded by the panoply of Chiefly rank - the umbrella, the fanfare upon the cow-horns, the Chief's official spokesman (ɔkyeame), and so on. In other circumstances, she walks in formal procession side by side with the Chief, to his left. Her own matrilineage, like those of Chiefs and former Chiefs, claims to rank as "royal" (ebusuadehya) by virtue of its possession of her title. She herself takes precedence over the male Stool-Holder of her lineage, with her word, so it is said, overriding his in the selection of any future Chief.

Her prerogative extends beyond purely ceremonial and exceptional circumstances to more day-to-day affairs. It is not unknown that she, conferring with elders of the town, should voice decisions on matters affecting the community. She holds regular arbitration sessions, moreover,

which are open to any of the townspeople. Her competence here is thought particularly to cover cases concerning women and children.

It should be noted, in passing, that in Low Town there is at present no Queen Mother.

3(c) The Asafo Companies. Along with the various "Stools", whose political significance has just been explained, the other important institution encompassed within "traditional" organisation is that of the "asafo" military company. These groups have political functions both latent and manifest, as the closing paragraphs of this section will show. They also retain a profound ritual significance which will form the basis of the discussion in a later chapter (Chap.8, pp.236-286). It is essential, therefore, to describe the internal structure of the Saltpond companies in some depth. This is all the more required because the work of J.C. de Graft Johnson (1932), J.B. Christensen (1954a), and recently Ansu Datta (1972), has been showing that the structure of companies can vary strikingly from town to town[1].

Before dealing with the organisation of the companies, however, it will be necessary to comment on the significance of asafo among the Fante generally. There must then be given some indication of the forms of symbolism by which the companies assert their identity to outsiders, for, without this, asafo as such cannot be properly understood.

Asafo companies are essentially men's organisations, though they have certain women attached to them. Although they have their counterparts among the Asante and other Akan groups, they are widely considered to have been most elaborated by the Fante[2]. In former times they provided the only military organisation within and among the various states, and they are known, for instance, to have mobilised the combined Fante forces for the Asante Wars of the 19th century[3]. This is not to imply, though, that they

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[1] See especially Datta 1972:310.
[2] Rattray 1929:120-122; de Graft Johnson 1932:307; Field 1948:26-28,32-34,145-146.
[3] Busia 1951:91-96; Christensen 1954a:107-108; Datta & Porter 1971:280.
de Graft Johnson 1932:310.

necessarily had a unifying effect upon the Fante population as a whole, for they equally engaged in intermittent battles with other Fante towns both outside and within their own states. They also sometimes took action against disfavoured factions inside their own towns, as will be shown later with reference to some Christian groups (Chap.5, p.144).

The ideology of a military function, not only as a glory of the past but supposedly as a living fact today, is essential to the very being of the companies in their present forms. This is so, even though they have not been able to indulge in warlike activities since the advent of the colonial and independent national governments. During colonial times, however, the rivalry between different companies, which in the past could have taken the form of inter-town skirmishing, persisted. Not infrequently, it broke out again into violent encounters which the authorities, regarding as civil disorder, attempted to check. Regulations were introduced to control the companies' activities[1]. Nevertheless, the rivalry continues keenly today; further eruptions of violence, though they occur more rarely, remain a constant possibility. The companies appear still to exercise a powerful hold on the imaginations of most Fante, even of many who choose not to participate directly in their affairs.

In many Fante towns there is just the one asafo comapny, but in some there are several; in Saltpond, as has already been shown (pp. 101-102), there are three. The competitive or even warlike outlook of the various companies has apparently inspired much of the symbolism by which they assert their existence to outsiders, a symbolism which also expresses the special claims of each group to distinctiveness. Probably the most striking manifestation of this display occurs in connection with the so-called "asafo post" (termed in Fante: posuban) built by each company near the centre of the definite tract of territory within the town which it claims as in a certain sense its own (p. 121).

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[1] de Graft Johnson 1932:307,315-317,321-322; Christensen 1954a:123-125; Kimble 1963:142-143; Datta 1972:311-314.

The "asafo post" is a concrete structure of some considerable size, maybe 20 feet square and as many high, which is used in part as a company shrine. Inside there is a small room for storage, and the outside is decorated with elaborate concrete sculpture, brilliantly painted. In Saltpond, these take mainly animal forms[1]. The No.1 Company post, for instance, is guarded by two life-size lions; the lion, says the company, "does not fail in fighting", and likewise when this company engages in battle, it is supposed "never to allow its enemies to escape". This same post also features a padlock and keys, signifying that its company constitutes the twafo ("leading") division of the State, that which "holds the keys of Nkusukum". At the very crown of the structure, guarded by two more lions, struts a crowing cock, who proclaims that "anyone who hears the sound of No.1 Company, will know that the Paramount is approaching". In Low Town, the fishing-village, the even more elaborate post of No.2 Company depicts great monsters of the deeps, a whale and a walrus, guarded by griffins and two-headed eagles, these together signifying aspects of ferocity, courage and alertness. No.3 Company, however, has only a relatively simple concrete structure, unpainted and with little decoration.

These company posts are so obviously displayed that they cannot be overlooked, but they are not the only expression of the companies' attributes. To begin with, each company owns a flag which is vividly embroidered and appliqued with designs bearing this same significance. Formerly, the flag would have been carried into war as a standard; now, it is taken in procession on ceremonial occasions. Then, as well as its name, each company possesses its own greetings. It also has its own drum-

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[1] Christensen (1954a:112), whose researches covered several Fante communities from varied locations, observes that these company posts achieved their fullest elaboration in the coastal states, attributing their original inspiration to the fortified "castles" built in these areas by the European trading companies. Inland, he reports, the post may consist only of a simple mound of cement or clay. Even more elaborate sculptures are found outside Saltpond in some other coastal towns, often featuring such items as weapons and warships in addition to animals.

calls, which are sounded on the large asafo drum belonging to the company, itself an object of special ritual attention. The different companies have exclusive rights to use certain additional musical instruments in their festivities. No.1 Company, for instance, sounds a bugle and a bell, and No.2 Company most notably a drum, of an unusual, long form, which is named Ɔtsɛguan ("he who hears it flees away"), and highly revered. The rights in these are so zealously protected that unauthorised use by another company provides sufficient ground for hostilities, but they can apparently be extended to other companies in return for payment or as a mark of friendship. Finally, members of the different companies are said to wear a particular colour as of right, though in my experience it was rare for any member to adopt special costume[1] except the recognised Flag-Bearers who parade in their "traditional" raffia dress.

Having now covered the principal outward forms of asafo in Saltpond, it is possible to turn to the extended treatment of its structural aspects. Here, much of its significance lies in the fact that it can be regarded in many respects as representing the ordinary townsman. "The asafo is the town," people repeat, and answer questions as to who are its members with the reply, "Everybody". This, though, is true only metaphorically. As has been noted in other Fante areas[2], membership is transmitted - contrary to the prevailing rule of descent and the dominant mode of inheritance - from father to son. It thus requires neither residence in the town, nor affiliation to a local matrilineage[3]. Informants' estimates of numbers often include this vast range of potential members, and most Fante males can name a company, somewhere, to which they consider themselves to belong. In practice, however, those taking an active interest are relatively few. On the whole, they do not include people living outside

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[1] This is not the case in all Fante towns, and some companies march in elaborate army-style and police-style uniforms.

[2] de Graft Johnson 1932:311-312; Christensen 1954a:107-109; Datta 1972:310-311

[3] These conditions would however have been fulfilled more frequently in the past when travel was more difficult and cross-cousin marriage more common.

town, though some such might make a special journey to join with fellow-members in the annual Town Festival.

During this research, it was observed on ceremonial occasions of this kind (see, e.g., Chap.8, p.244,p.268), that the active membership of No.1 Company amounted to about 60, excluding the officers and the "junior" members. The latter (the ɔdahwer: the ignorant; lit: "he who is here to watch") number some 50, but these, their ages ranging from about 8 to 15, are no more than children. The "senior" grade of membership is itself divided by age into two groups, each numbering approximately 30. The lower of these grades (piannkɔ: "if they push, do not move") comprises men of about 15 to 35 years of age. The higher grade (mmannsuro: "have no fear") takes in more mature men from about 35 to 45 or 50. There is also an upper grade, sometimes referred to as the "grands" (duawusuu: "bush forest"; lit: "shady tree"), for those in their later years, but in practice virtually all the men of this age attending asafo events appeared to be officers of the company (see below, p.114). The officers - not all of whom are elderly - generally numbered something in the region of 10, although more could be named (some would usually be away on business, or were resident in other towns). Female company members would also be present, to the strength of up to 10.

No.2 Company from Low Town can muster at least as many members as this. No.3 Company, on the other hand, appears to receive less support, and outsiders accuse it of being moribund. It was never observed in action by the writer, though certain of its duties appeared to have been performed during the field period (see Chap.8, p.253).

To conclude this discussion of the size of companies, it must be stressed that asafo in fact engages the active interest of only a minority of the menfolk of the town. Nevertheless, its organisation is such that it can readily involve considerably higher numbers in any matter where public feeling runs high, and this potentiality should be borne in mind.

No very elaborate action is apparently required in order to join the asafo. Young boys, if they so wish, merely join in the activities of their own company during the annual festival, doing this often at the instigation of their fathers, from whom they have received the right of membership. Subsequently, they continue to participate in asafo affairs as young men if and when they please.

Command of each of the asafo companies rests with a hierarchy of status-positions graded into so-called "officer" ranks. The structure of rank in the Saltpond companies shows much in common with that which has been previously reported of companies elsewhere. Nevertheless, certain divergences are apparent, and these serve to heighten the variability of asafo among the Fante which was referred to earlier.

The pattern of organisation in Saltpond differs from that of, for instance, Anomabu. There, the head of each separate company apparently takes the title of supi, the several supifo being together subordinate to a supreme commander of the entire Anomabu State, who holds the title of tufohen[1]. In Saltpond, on the other hand, each separate company has a tufohen as its own head, and has also a number of supifo ranking beneath him. This shows closer (though not complete) similarity with other cases published more recently[2].

My Saltpond informants styled the tufohen in English as "general", the supifo as "major", and officers of the first rank, asafohen, as "captain". The companies additionally make available a number of female offices entitled asafoakyere ("sister of the asafo"; popularly translated as "female captain"), whose holders have authority to give orders to rank-and-file male members when necessary. More usually, though, the "female captains" act more as a small women's wing of the company, joining as a group with the men in procession and providing encouragement and support with the enthusiastic singing of asafo songs. There was no evidence

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[1] Christensen 1954a:109-110
[2] Datta 1972:306

in Saltpond of any organised wing of untitled female asafo members, as has been reported from other Fante communities[1], though some informants held that women, like men, automatically belong to their fathers' companies. This seems to be a further point where there is variability from town to town. As regards numbers of officers, the respective companies are staffed by some 2-8 "majors", some 10 "captains", and an equivalent number of "female captains", the higher figures applying in each case to No.1 Company.

It is probably in the mode of transmission of these asafo offices that the Saltpond companies differ most strikingly from those dealt with in previous publications. Other writers report that asafo offices are usually inherited, like membership itself, from father to son, though they concede that certain of the most senior titles - those of tufohen[2], and by one account also of supi[3] - can sometimes pass matrilineally. In Saltpond, on the other hand, all offices - whether of tufohen, supi, asafohen, or asafoakyerɛ - are generally transferable along the uterine line within the matrilineal lineage, and thus follow the prevailing rule of descent. There is a still more intimate connection between the companies and lineage organisation in that every maximal lineage (one which, as informants say, "owns a Stool" for its ancestors, but which is not necessarily a recognised town "Stool-Holding" lineage; Chap.3, pp.77-82) is allowed also to own two "whips", the symbols of asafo office, one for a male and one a female "captain" respectively. The "majors" (supifo) are occasionally said to be chosen on the grounds only of personal merit, and certainly it is open to the asafo to create new offices of this rank at any time. Nevertheless, all promotions actually monitored during this research followed the standard pattern of matrilineal succession.

In the event of a vacancy, the successor is generally proposed by his own matrilineage, but it is up to the company whether they accept him

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[1] c.f. de Graft Johnson 1932:308,314; Christensen 1954a:111; Datta 1972:307
[2] Christensen 1954a:109-110
[3] Datta 1972:306; see also Datta & Porter 1971:281.

or not. They can, and often do, "capture" some quite different lineage member to be installed (c.f. Chap.8, pp.268-269). The asafo maintain that they look neither for the most wealthy candidate nor for the candidate most closely related to his predecessor, but instead for a man of sound judgement and cool temper, one who is capable of restraining asafo members from their worst excesses of bravado. All the same, a reasonably solid financial background is required in order to fulfil the responsibilities of office. In contrast to the ordinary members, therefore (c.f. Chap.8, pp.259-261), the officers are of a relatively high "class" status. None the less, the successor is usually as closely related to his predecessor as this and the other conditions admit.

There is a further senior official of No.1 Company, who appears to succeed on a somewhat different basis. This is the ɔbaatan, the "parent" of the asafo, who, ranking above the supifo ("majors"), takes his place in the councils of the asafo elders (asafo mpanyimfo). By custom, he makes the formal announcement to the elders' gathering of the decisions which have been reached during their deliberations. In some of the locations studied by Christensen, the title of ɔbaatan was seemingly used, as an occasional alternative to that of supi, for the individual head of a company, and was transferred according to the same rules[1]. My information from Saltpond, on the other hand - where in any case the status hierarchy is rather different - , was that the ɔbaatan was the oldest member of the company. This, however, was not adequately confirmed, and, it being a statement with a number of possible metaphorical interpretations, should not be accepted without question.

Each of the Saltpond companies maintains an intimate relationship with the Stool-Holder who heads the division of Nkusukum State which they each constitute: No.1 and No.2 Companies with the Chiefs of Upper Town and Low Town respectively; No.3 Company with the Stool-Holder in Eguabadu, Upper Town, whose status is disputed (see p.102). J.B. Christensen has

[1] Christensen 1954a:110; see also above, pp.114-115.

reported from other Fante communities that a man acceding to the position of Chief must sever his connection with his own company[1], but no such change of status at this time was very apparent in Saltpond. Here, some informants maintained that the Chief keeps his membership, and many made the remark that "Every Chief must have an asafo company." Certainly, however, the Chief ceases to participate directly in asafo affairs, whether festive or deliberative.

All the companies confer further titles upon members of ordinary rank. The body of men in each company have their own Spokesman (ɔkyeame), who speaks for the company on formal occasions and acts at other times as a channel of communication between the men and the officers. Each company, furthermore, has its official Flag-Bearer (otuakwan: "he who goes before along the road"), who, wearing the "traditional" raffia dress and performing vigorous possession-dances, carries the asafo flag in procession. No.1 Company have in addition a Bell-Bearer and a Bugle-Bearer, who perform in the same style. Finally, each company has its own drummers, without whose essential skills the asafo could not operate. It never became fully clear during the research how these office-holders were recruited, although one Flag-Bearer claimed to have inherited his own title from his mother's brother and to receive his inspiration from matrilineage ancestors[2]. One asafo drummer, with no inherited affiliation to any of the Saltpond companies, had definitely been appointed to his position in No.1 Company, such skills being nowadays in short supply; this, though, was said by asafo elders to be an exceptional case.

Last but by no means least, there are, attached to each Saltpond asafo company, an influential set of ritual functionaries, the akɔmfo (sing: ɔkɔmfo; lit: "he who performs the possession-dance"). In Saltpond, as is often the case among the Fante, these roles are held not by men

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[1] Christensen 1954a:118

[2] Christensen (1954a:110) apparently found this office to be appointive.

butby some very knowing and mostly quite elderly women. These possession-priestesses act largely as individual consultants, soliciting healing and other benefits from their own special deities (abosom) on behalf of private clients, an aspect of their work which will be covered in a later chapter (Chap.7, pp.231-233). Some, however, are also recognised as having fallen under the influence of the local deities (likewise abosom) which dwell in nearby natural objects such as streams or extraordinarily shaped trees, each of whom requires a priestess to care for his needs. The priestess thus becomes attached to the asafo company which claims special rights over the part of town where the deity in question lives.

A local deity supposedly reveals that he requires the services of a particular person, just as does any more distant god, by "coming to her in spirit", with the result that she shows obvious signs of his presence (see Chap.7, pp.225-227). Often, especially with local deities, this does not occur until after the death of his previous attendant. The process of becoming possessed by one of these beings, and thereafter of winning popular recognition of the event (a particularly necessary condition in the case of the local deities), is one which offers a certain scope for individual effort. Onlookers expect a potential priestess to betray typical symptoms of the god's presence within her during her day-to-day life, or at least to display her ability to perform the deity's particular dance in a suitable state of dissociation. These are behaviour patterns which, according to "traditional" belief, could be exhibited by anyone. In practice, usually only members of a relatively restricted circle make the claim and have it recognised. The succeeding attendant is commonly another already established possession-priestess living in the company's territory, or possibly a close relative of the predecessor - perhaps a daughter or a sister's daughter - who has become possessed by the predecessor's personal deities as well, and who has taken over her personal shrine. Either way, it is the asafo company who accord the successor final recognition, and

some informants say it is they who teach her the steps of their local deity's possession-dance.

The precise relationships of the several possession-priestesses connected to each asafo company can vary, both among themselves and with respect to the company as such. Usually, the company priestesses number some half-dozen, of whom one takes care of the needs of the principal deity of the company's territory, and is regarded as senior to the rest. In the case of one company, the senior priestess tends every other major deity within its area, but elsewhere the duties are shared, the other deities falling to one or other more junior priestess. (Exceptionally, claims by priestesses to deities come into conflict.) All the established priestesses resident in the company's territory - or, perhaps more accurately, those whose matrilineage homes lie within it - are usually accorded an attachment to the company, and are allowed to deputise for the senior priestess in her absence. Responsibility for a deity, even for a principal deity, has been known to be transferred from one still living incumbent to another, indeed from one priestess still practising today, but the grounds for this are obscure.

The supposed power of these priestesses to manipulate the various local deities gives them considerable influence within their asafo companies, where they can figure among the inner circle of asafo elders. The senior priestess in particular carries a voice of exceptional weight, being consulted over all important decisions.

This last point leads on to consideration of the informal, as opposed to the formal, distribution of influence within the companies. This is a topic without which, as Datta has insisted[1], discussion of asafo hierarchies should not close. In the Saltpond companies, decision-making power rests with the asafo elders (asafo mpanyimfo), in accordance with previous reports from elsewhere[2]. Here, though, contrary to the information

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[1] Datta 1972:306
[2] Christensen 1954a:111

from other locations, all such elders seem to be of officer rank, with the possible exception of the possession-priestesses. (For the latter, rank is perhaps an anomalous consideration.) It is largely at this senior level that the formal and informal hierarchies diverge, for although there is a definite recognised chain of command between officers, in practice the greatest weight in decision-making is not automatically wielded by those of the very highest ranks. Among asafo elders, those with the strongest personalities are able to sway the discussions and to win the added respect of their fellows.

This brings the treatment of the internal structure of the asafo companies in Saltpond to an end. There will shortly be a discussion of the companies' political significance, the factor which warranted their inclusion in this chapter in the first place. First, though, their other important present-day activities will win a brief mention.

It has already been shown that the companies formerly had a military significance which has now had to be largely abandoned except in the nature of an ideology. Other "traditional" functions have been retained, however, if in an attenuated form. At most of their gatherings nowadays, the companies perhaps function primarily as recreational associations, bringing their members together to drink, to listen to the asafo drumming, and to perform its special dances and songs. The occasion most frequently providing excuse for such conviviality occurs at the commemorative funeral rite for one of the former members, which the company is obliged to attend in order to "play" and thereby honour their departed comrade. Emphasis on the recreational side of asafo membership is nothing new. Members are said to have once met together of an evening almost as a matter of course, simply in order to drum and to drink together[1], an event which is now in Saltpond virtually unheard of. But it should be noted that all asafo festivities have a second significance in the religious sphere. The very

[1]This aspect has been emphasised also by Datta (1972:310).

rhythms of the asafo drum bear a ritual meaning, and the drum itself is treated as yet another deity. This is all quite additional to the formal roles which the companies take in the official rituals of the division, such as the annual Town Festival or the installation of a Chief. Even today, asafo and religion are truly inextricable. This will become still more apparent from the discussion in Chapter 8 (pp.236-286).

The political significance of the asafo companies is the real concern at present. This, to an extent, is latent. For instance, asafo provides an idiom articulating the organisational structure of the complete "traditional" State of Nkusukum. To begin with, asafo ideology dictates the formal relationships of the Chiefs to the Paramount, and severally one with another. Furthermore, the manner by which the companies assert their respective Chief's claims in his own lands delimits the various territorial components of the entire area.

Such claims need generally be asserted only by ritual and other symbolic action. Companies achieve their aim - even today - by exercising their rights to parade, to drum, and to display their regalia over their own territory, and conversely by insisting that other companies observe the proper etiquettes before passing through in ceremonial style. Perhaps most importantly, though, they must perform the necessary rituals for their local nature-deities; thereby they maintain their claims to the tracts of land on which each local god stands and which together make up the whole company territory. (This subject will receive closer attention later; Chap.8, pp. 277-281). However, in spite of the emphasis which they place on symbolism, the companies stand ever-ready to defend their territorial rights by physical force. The inter-company violence so often referred to does not necessarily erupt over trivialities, or even over the mere misappropriation of asafo symbols[1], for the latter can bear a deeper meaning with important political implications. Most of the more recent

[1] c.f. Datta 1972:313.

conflicts between companies in Saltpond, some of which will be detailed at a later stage, arose from disputes over land which had first found expression in a symbolic context (see Chap.8, pp.277-281). Nowadays, of course, such disputes must be finally settled in a court of law.

Perhaps more important than the latent implications of asafo, for the present stage of the analysis, are its remaining overt political activities. Within each division, the asafo functions as the executive arm of "traditional" government, taking a role complementary to that of the Chief and Stool-Holders. (These latter still have a degree of legislative authority in respect of local affairs; see above, pp.104-105; below, pp.124-125). New local laws, made by the Chief in council, are proclaimed to the community at his request by the asafo company, who send one or some few of their number to beat a drum around the town so as to attract the attention of townspeople. No.1 Company in Upper Town usually assign this duty to the company Spokesman. The Chiefs can, furthermore - and from time to time do - , send members of the company to apprehend wrongdoers and bring them before their courts for judgement, if necessary with the use of physical force. Regular public work around the town, which would once have fallen to the asafo companies, is now largely carried out by the Local Council (c.f. p.126), but they remain in readiness to cope with any sudden emergencies such as fire or flood[1]. This latter continues to be a likely danger, even since the drainage work carried out in colonial times, for in the wet season the River Nkasaku flowing into the lagoon can still burst its banks to engulf the main road and many of the older houses. The Low Town company keeps itself especially prepared to deal also with accidents at sea affecting its fishermen members. In eventualities of this kind, members of the companies assemble at the call of the asafo drum, which might once have led them into battle. Most profess to find its beat utterly compelling.

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[1] see likewise Christensen 1954a:120.

Further to this, the asafo companies in Saltpond have a voice in the selection or deposition of their Chiefs, and their central role in the installation ritual (Chap.8, pp.274-276) provides them with a power in this respect which is supposedly unassailable. As mentioned above (p.106), No.1 Company has apparently refused to install a suggested Chief of Upper Town within recent memory. (Ansu Datta, incidentally, has remarked that this function is not universal to all asafo companies among the Fante, being relevant primarily in the coastal states[1].) At other times, asafo elders discuss among themselves any matter affecting the town in general, receiving and perhaps sometimes influencing the opinions of rank-and-file members. The Chiefs cannot lightly disregard the views which they pass on, for fear of losing their support. The companies thus have a political influence today which is broadly commensurate with the real importance of the Chiefs at the present time. This question will be discussed in the concluding sections of this chapter.

4. The Chiefs in "Modern" Government. Before the establishment of colonial rule over the Gold Coast in the 19th century, the Chiefs provided the very focus of "traditional" power structures. Though restrained by customary checks and balances, they acknowledged no superiors but for other Chiefs to whom they perhaps owed allegiance. Chieftaincy as an institution was unassailed. However - as has often been remarked, most notably by K.A. Busia in his comprehensive analysis of adaptations of Chieftaincy in Asante[1] - , since the superimposition of new forms of government, and more generally under the impact of a wide range of socioeconomic forces of Western origin, the Chiefs have lost their position of supreme power. With it has gone much of their prestige and authority.

Admittedly, Chiefs were employed by the colonial government as instruments in the implementation of its policy of "indirect rule". Under this, "natural rulers" of native populations were sought and then empowered

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[1] Busia 1951:214.

to perform such of their customary functions as enabled them to provide a convenient method of local government. But, despite the fact that this official support to an extent buttressed the Chiefs' position with respect to local opponents, they now each required government recognition to hold office, and in effect reigned solely at the government's pleasure.

During the earlier colonial period, the Chiefs were regarded as the only true representatives of the people, and certain of the more prominent among them were accorded places in regional councils of advisory status[1]. However, the subsequent introduction and extension of directly elected representation, which culminated in Independence in 1957, progressively undermined their influence yet further. By the time of this research in 1973, it had become very relevant to ask whether the Chiefs, and the "traditional" systems which they headed, then retained any real power at all. This is a question of the utmost significance for the present work, since its answer can be expected to bear vital implications for much of the ritual which is the real focus of the study.

By 1973, many constitutional changes had occurred since Independence. Ghana was then administered by its second military government, under the name of the National Redemption Council, which had taken office after the coup of 1972. This had suspended all forms of elected representation and banned any kind of party political activity, actions which had automatically affected the agencies of local government. Nevertheless, legal provisions covering Chieftaincy remained relatively unchanged. The model of "traditional" organisation recognised in law had not indeed altered in its essentials since it was defined by President Nkrumah in 1961[2].

At that time, the area of jurisdiction of a Paramount Chief was designated as a "Traditional Area" (formerly it had been termed in law a "State"); the territory of any lesser Chief, recognised as such by

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[1] Rubin & Murray 1961:210
[2] Ghana 1961(1):6-7.

custom and government jointly, was termed a "Division". The law further sanctioned the existence of both Traditional Councils (formerly known as State Councils) and Divisional Councils. These, to many appearances, took their customary form. Traditional Councils were to be made up of the Paramount, as President, and those lesser Chiefs of the area whom the government authorised. Divisional Councils were to consist of the Divisional Chief, together with his own customary advisers as recognised by his ruling Paramount and the Traditional Council. The councils at each level were given permission to carry out their so-called "customary functions", the upper body being specifically empowered to mediate in succession disputes not involving the Paramount himself.

Disregarding differences in terminology, there was in all this a certain parallel with the previous legal framework, and even in many respects with the old Native Authority system of colonial times. Legislation passed by Premier Busia's Second Republic in 1971 had not brought about any great changes in this respect either[1], and the NRC in coming to power had allowed the law to stand with only minor amendments[2].

This, then, was the statutory backing behind the Saltpond Chiefs in 1973, and that which chartered their respective Divisional Councils (p.104). It was this that legally empowered them to continue at the time in the performance of their "traditional" administrative and judicial roles on the local scene, roles such as were detailed earlier in this chapter. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the current government, like all its predecessors, had retained its right to approve the occupancy of any Chiefly Stool, an approval which, as before, could be withdrawn. By this sanction the government, which provided the ultimate source of the Chiefs' powers, ensured that their activities were confined within limits acceptable to itself.

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[1] Ghana 1971.
[2] Ghana 1972.

The colonial ordinances were the precursors not only of the contemporary legislation defining the Ghanaian "traditional" authority, but also of the law governing the "modern" Local Councils. These have been operating in parallel with the older bodies since 1951, and have responsibility for the wide range of public works rendered necessary by "modern" conditions. The legislative changes of 1951 introduced elected councillors, alongside the so-called traditional representatives, on Local Councils throughout the country[1]. The subsequent history of local administration has seen, through Independence and the ensuing governmental changes, repeated reorganisations oscillating around elective, traditional, and sometimes appointive principles of representation.

The former achieved its ultimate expression in Kwame Nkrumah's Local Government Act of 1961, under which Local Councils became wholly elected[2]. This system was set aside in 1966 by the first military government, which replaced the Local Councils with Local Management Committees staffed entirely by appointed civil servants[3]. Thereafter, there was something of a swing back in favour of the "traditional" rulers. In 1974, shortly after this research was completed, the second military government announced its plan for a system which re-introduced the "traditional" members in proportions up to one-half on Local Councils and one-third on the higher-level District Councils[4] (the remaining members were to be government appointees). During the field period of 1973, local government was still being carried out by the civil servants appointed on to the Mfantsiman Local Council Management Committee. Nevertheless, changes were then under way which were to give the Chiefs a rather greater weight in local administrative decisions than they had enjoyed for some time.

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[1] Gold Coast 1951:381-386
[2] Ghana 1961(2):13
[3] Ghana 1966:1,3
[4] Ghana 1974(1):3.

The town of Saltpond has all along provided the headquarters for whichever administrative area it has been included in. Over the years, various groupings of the "traditional" Fante states have been tried out for the purposes of local government. In 1973, they mostly (with the exception of Abura, Ekumfo and the Ayan states) fell under the jurisdiction of the Mfantsiman Local Council Management Committee. This covered Nkusukum, Mankesim, Anomabu, Abeadze, and Ayeldu-Kwaman (see Fig.1.1, p.11).

Changes afoot during that period were expected to produce a rather different two-tier system in 1974, whereby the basic unit was to become the Mfantsiman District Council, covering all the above-mentioned Fante states and, in addition, neighbouring Asebu[1]. Most of the separate Traditional Areas were then to become the territorial bases of the new and smaller Local Councils. However, the greatest interest of the system for the purpose here lies in the treatment it was to give to Nkusukum Traditional Area, in which Saltpond itself is situated. In 1974, the two (dis-joined) parts of Nkusukum were divided for the first time between different administrative agencies, the outpost surrounding Saltpond falling under the new Nkusukum Local Council, the territories near the state capital under the so-called Yamoransa Local Council. Upon the District Council, there was to be only one traditional representative for the entire Nkusukum Area. The lower-level body, on the other hand, was to offer to the Saltpond Chiefs a prospect for participation in the administration of their immediate local communities without hindrance from their Paramount. Political manoeuvrings in Saltpond throughout 1972-1973, possibly associated with the changes to come, had important consequences for much of the "traditional" ritual performed at that time. This will be seen in Chapter 8 (pp.282-284).

The final part of this chapter will consider to what extent the survival of the Chiefs depends on the government backing outlined above.

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[1] Ghana 1974(2).

5. The Contemporary Significance of the "Traditional" Political System. It has just been shown that in 1973 the Saltpond Chiefs, like those elsewhere in Ghana, were still receiving much the same government support as they had since colonial days, and were again about to be employed as agents for local administration. Their power in the local community was real, in that within their own permitted sphere of action, their decisions could be enforced by sanctions which ultimately had the support of statutory law.

Following this, it is necessary to ask whether, with the simple removal of government backing, Chieftaincy as an institution would wither away, together with the entire "traditional" system into which it is integrated.

Changes of a more general socioeconomic type, it is true, have undermined the Chiefs' positions, in Saltpond as elsewhere. The high proportion of their subjects who now work outside the town have largely escaped their jurisdiction. In-migrant workers, equally significant in numbers, have no place of their own in the "traditional" structure. Indeed, the whole new "class-based" system of organisation analysed in Chapter 2 can itself be said to militate against the influence of the Chiefs.

Nevertheless, the Chiefs still draw upon purely local sources of power. The consensus of local feeling is still to give them the allegiance which by custom they have been owed. Detractors are not infrequently encountered in city circles - particularly among the highly educated - , but, while local residents may well criticise a particular Chief as incompetent, or as being an improper occupant of the Stool, the office as such is almost universally respected. The general population continue to accept his authority, and with it any opportunities which still remain for patronage or material benefit. His immediate subordinates maintain a tacit agreement with him that they will mutually continue to promote each other to their respective positions of prestige and influence.

Even today, this support for the Chiefs in local opinion probably rests not so much upon mere sentiments of loyalty as upon the differential allocation of local resources, and particularly of land. This has brought about a relatively favourable distribution of income and wealth to a few restricted matrilineage segments (see Chap.3, pp.81-82). This advantage, though no longer pre-eminent now that new opportunities for individual advancement have arisen, is yetawhile significant.

So it is, perhaps, that although governments have imposed controls upon the Chiefs and have readily removed individuals from office for political reasons (as commonly occurs somewhere or another upon any change of regime), none has yet thought to attack the system wholesale. All governments, even non-parliamentary ones, require a wide range of public support in order to operate smoothly, and the "traditional" systems, even now, constitute power structures which taken together they cannot easily ignore. As long as the economic bases for these systems are allowed to stand, they may be expected to continue to hold a real and practical importance in the affairs of their local community. The implications of this for the ritual domain will be discussed in Chapter 8.

PART III. CHRISTIANITY IN SALTPOND.

Chapter 5. CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM: THE ARRIVAL AND EXPANSION OF THE NEW RELIGIONS.

Parts I and II of this thesis have given an outline of the politico-economic organisation of Saltpond, both as it exists at the time of writing, and as it has changed during the preceding century. Most particularly, for the sake of this chapter and the next, there has been a discussion of the impact of the "modern" cash economy. This new economy was introduced to the Fante region as a result of overseas contact with Europe. With it, there entered the "modern", or Western-type, educational system.

The dramatic expansion of Western education in the region can probably be seen, in large part, as a result of the successful implantation and development of the "modern" economy. The two together, as Chapter 2 demonstrated, have brought about a changed occupational structure resulting in a new pattern of social organisation which can be described as a "class" system.

Part III of the thesis must now deal with the third significant cultural import from Europe, that is, the new religion of Christianity. It will indeed show that the growth of this, too, over the last century, bears an intimate connection with the economic and social developments just mentioned.

The present chapter will look at Christianity among the Fante, and in Saltpond in particular, from a historical perspective. This is an approach which is not always given any great weight in sociological treatments of religion, but a discussion of this kind is helpful for a number of reasons. Some of these are a matter of convenience; others are sociological in their implications.

To begin with, it must always be remembered that no individual settlement exists in isolation from its regional and national surroundings. The contemporary pattern of religious organisation in Saltpond has been

determined, in part, by influences permeating from outside. These, themselves, reflect social and economic forces working upon a broader scale than over the mere local scene of Saltpond. (Changes of this order have been sketched out briefly in Chapter 1, pp.19-24.) A historical treatment of the growth of a new religion can put the local developments within their wider context. Changes in religion can be assessed against changes of other kinds, changes occurring over a wide area and through an extended period of time. Thus, useful sociological insights emerge. At the same time, the discussion allows the opportunity to show the way in which the present-day Saltpond churches fall each within their own national organisational network. In another sense, then, the Saltpond churches are set into their proper, national, context.

This approach is also convenient in that it readily lends itself to a review of the whole range of Christian organisation in the town. The pages which follow will consider each of the local churches in turn, looking first at the way in which they were established in Ghana, and then how they were introduced to Saltpond itself. During the discussions, mention will be made of the differing beliefs, attitudes and practices of the different churches, and thus the varying character of churches in the town will become apparent. In certain cases, the not inconsiderable confusion which has arisen with regard to churches of similar name will be clarified; this confusion widely besets the local inhabitants, and occasionally misleads commentators upon the national scene as well, and therefore this undertaking is in itself valuable. The discussion as a whole will begin to make apparent certain processes, in the sphere of religious activity and organisation, which are typical both of the Fante generally and of the people of Saltpond in particular.

The present chapter will find it necessary to take as its principal subject not Upper Saltpond alone, but, alongside it, Low Town, even though it is the first of these communities which provides the real subject of

this research. Certain of the Christian churches in the town are notable for drawing their congregations - or, at very least, a fair degree of less regular support - from both of these communities. Thus, for this specific purpose, neither community may be considered in isolation. The chapter will also give a brief mention to Islam, again to complete the context within which Christianity in the town should be viewed.

Last but not least, the findings of this chapter will be drawn upon as a basis for the classification of the various Christian churches in the town into three broad types. The resulting classificatory scheme will provide an essential tool for the sociological analysis which is presented in Chapter 6.

1. The Coming of Christianity. Christianity, in fact, first began to spread into the trading towns along the Gold Coast rather gradually, from the early 1700s onwards. This was long before the arrival of any European missionary to work directly among the African population. The new religion came to be regarded as an essential element in a new sub-culture emerging as a result of overseas contact, the initial bearers of which were the mulatto offspring of European traders. These were educated, and instructed in the Christian faith, at the "castle schools" inside the fortified European trading stations. In the Fante area, during this period, the influences which they received were largely Anglican. Mulatto children were trained to fill clerical positions with the trading companies, and their new occupational status began to give them an increasingly advantageous position with respect to other Fante. In due course, as the volume of trade increased, demand for clerical workers grew, and educational opportunities at the "castles" were extended to certain young men of purely Fante descent. These came to accept the Europeans and mulattoes on the coast as a reference group setting standards for the new and prestigious way of life.

In this way, Christianity began to spread beyond the confines of the "castles" to the indigenous coastal peoples. By the 1820s, small groups

of African Christians were meeting together on their own initiative in all the major Fante trading towns, in order to pray and to study the Bible. However, the Anglican chaplains had always considered their duty to lie with the European communities inside the "castles", rather than outside, and the African Christians were left entirely to their own devices[1]. Thus, they were eager to welcome the missionary assistance which, hereabouts, came initially from the Methodist Church.

a) The Methodist Church. News of the vigorous activities of the Cape Coast "Bible Band" reached the Methodist Church in England, together with a request for assistance, in 1834. This was a time when English Christians were becoming increasingly interested in mission work, and their response was so swift that a minister reached the group in the new year of 1835. The Cape Coast Christians were formed by him into a Methodist "class meeting", and within a few months the Christian group at Anomabu, another prominent trading town 10 miles eastwards, received similar recognition[2].

It is not certain when the Saltpond group of Christians came together, but there are reports that a Methodist group in town was receiving occasional visits from the Cape Coast minister by 1839[3], and that work on the chapel building began that same year[4]. By 1841, by which time the more complete form of Methodist organisation had been established on the Gold Coast, the Saltpond group fell under the responsibility of the Superintendent Minister of the then separate Anomabu circuit[5].

Whether these beginnings in Saltpond took place in Upper Town or Low Town is, nowadays, difficult to determine. Today, there are two Methodist chapels, one in each settlement, and both are inclined to claim seniority. It is not inconceivable that the first inclinations towards Christianity should have arisen in Upper Saltpond - always, no doubt, the more

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[1] Bartels 1965:3-9
[2] ibid:11-16
[3] ibid:40
[4] ibid:42
[5] ibid:350

modernistic - but documentary proof has not come to light. Be that as it may, a Methodist school has apparently existed on its present Upper Town site ever since the date of its foundation in 1840. Low Towners claim that they had a flourishing and separate Methodist community well before the dramatic exposure of the nananom pɔw in 1851.

The events of that year have been reconstructed and published by F.L. Bartels[1], a historian of the Methodist Church in Ghana. It will be useful here to summarise his account, for it is a story which even small children know in varying shades of inaccuracy, and more particularly one which has had immense repercussions through this entire Fante area. The Fante term nana, incidentally, is used of a grandparent or other elderly person, of a chief, or of an ancestor; the nananom pɔw was thus the "grove of the ancestors". More specifically, it was regarded as the dwelling-place of the spirits of the three great leaders of the mythical Fante migration from Tekyiman to Mankesim, who are believed to have been buried at that spot. If anything held the several Fante states together in those early days, it was this particular religious ideology, for the nananom were taken as the pre-eminent source of accessible spiritual power over the whole Fante area. They were controlled from their site just outside Mankesim by a group of priests who became particularly powerful, not only by virtue of the mystical sanctions which they wielded, but also, probably, as a result of the heavy fees which they demanded from their clients. These latter were mainly ordinary Fante men and women, who travelled, even over long distances, to consult the oracle of the nananom pɔw in time of need. The priests are alleged to have maintained close links with priests and priestesses of lesser deities in these outlying parts, in order to have the benefit of reliable intelligence. The oracle was also consulted, apparently, by the Paramount Chiefs of the individual Fante states, both at regular yearly intervals, and additionally when they were required to make an especially

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[1] Bartels 1965:55-59.

important decision (for instance, whether or not to declare war upon a neighbour). This was a practice which automatically gave the priests considerable influence in Fante politics.

It was probably inevitable that a cult with this degree of universality would in time come into conflict with the new Christian religion. According to Bartels, the nananom pɔw priests' fears for their own position were crystallised in 1849 by the settlement just outside their boundaries of a group of provocatively zealous Christians, who were by and large migrants - perhaps even renegades - from the fishing-village of Asaafa, some 7 miles east of Saltpond. These settlers had been led to the new site under the inspiration of a Methodist hunter from Anomabu. Matters came to a head in 1851, with the defection to the Christians of a member of the priests' very ranks; upon this, the priests, taking advantage of a subsequent intrusion of settlers into the sacred grove, persuaded the Paramount of Mankesim to take action to destroy the camp. In due course, an attempt was made by the British judicial assessor from Cape Coast to mediate between the two parties, but before the procedures were complete, accusations were made that the priests were plotting to kill three Anomabu Methodists who were playing a prominent part in the affair. From the same source, news leaked out explaining the machinery by which apparently miraculous happenings inside the grove were performed. The priests were then arraigned at a new hearing, where they admitted to the charges and were sentenced to a term of imprisonment. The deceptions once practised by the priests were exposed to public knowledge, and the cult was utterly discredited.

The exposure of the nananom pɔw came as something of a turning-point for the Methodist Church. At Mankesim itself, the Paramount Chief led a movement into the new faith. From many other towns and villages in the area, it is reported that the churches expanded at an unprecedented rate[1]. The effects cannot fail to have been felt as much in Saltpond - so near

[1] Bartels 1965:58-60.

to Mankesim - as elsewhere, although little of note has been reported about the local church during these years, or during the two decades that followed.

In 1874, responsibility for the Saltpond Methodists was assumed by a new Superintendent of the Anomabu Circuit to which - with Mankesim, Asaafa, and other surrounding settlements - the town still belonged. The successor was (a source of much pride to Saltpond Methodists today) the renowned, charismatic, and highly volatile half-negro missionary, the Rev. Thomas Birch Freeman. His term of office, which expired in 1896, was characterised by bitter confrontations with church superiors and also, as the following section will show (p.137-138), with certain local factions.

Later years of the 19th century, the great period of development of Saltpond as a commercial town, seem to have seen a steady growth in the Methodist Church. Figures dealing with Saltpond alone are not available, but by 1905 membership in the town and its immediate surroundings was sufficient for Saltpond to become independent from Anomabu as a circuit in its own right. So great indeed was the church's support, locally, that Saltpond numbered with Cape Coast and Accra among the only three Gold Coast circuits which were financially independent[1].

b) The Catholic Church. There is no question but that the formal beginnings of the Catholic Church in Saltpond took place in Low Town. This, the second Christian church to establish itself in the Fante area, had come to the Gold Coast in 1880 with the arrival of two French priests at Elmina. In Elmina itself, the Catholic fathers were well received, but further expansion was slow, and it was not until 1889 that the next station was successfully opened at Cape Coast[2].

In the meantime, there appears to have been some altercation within the Saltpond Methodist communities, for as a local source puts it:

> "It was in the year of 1890 in the reign of Nana Kobina Yaa (Chief Graham) of Low Town, Saltpond,

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[1] Bartels 1965:155
[2] Pfann 1965:14-29

> that 3 young men ..... sought permission from Nana Kobina Yaa to found Roman Catholic Church in the town by the faith received abroad through the arrogance of Rev. Freeman of the Wesleyan Mission by cursing the townsmen for their lack of faith by playing Asafo on Sundays[1]."

This must allude to a dispute between Low Town and the Methodist authorities of quite fundamental proportions, for, as was shown in Chapter 4 (pp.112-113), the asafo companies underpin much of the "traditional" religious and political apparatus of a Fante state or town. But, for whatever reason, it is clear that Nana Graham sent a request to the fathers at Elmina for a Catholic priest to establish a new church in Low Town, and that some months later, in the closing days of 1890, two young European missionaries were welcomed to Low Town by the Chief and his elders. The Low Town chapel, which had originally been built as a Methodist church, was given over to the new fathers for Catholic services. Nana Graham, personally, led the movement into the new church, and persuaded his townspeople to attend for instruction in the faith when fishing was over for the day[2].

This special relationship between the Lower Saltpond populace and the Catholic Church has continued, although it is no longer evident in so plain a form. Even in its earliest days in 1891, the Catholic Church encroached into Upper Town, for not only was accommodation for the missionaries found there, but, more importantly still, Catholic schools were opened simultaneously in both settlements[3]. In the July of that year, a violent storm destroyed the Upper Town building; the fathers, stricken by sickness, were withdrawn, the keener of the Upper Town pupils joined the Low Town school, and the affairs of the church were carried on by the efforts of the Low Town schoolmasters[4]. In 1893, however, the amalgamated school was transferred back to Upper Town[5]. After a second attempt to staff a mission

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[1] Catholic Church, Saltpond, n.d.(1):1
[2] Pfann 1965:31-32; Catholic Church, Saltpond, n.d.(1):2
[3] Catholic Church, Saltpond, n.d.(2):1
[4] Pfann 1965:33; Catholic Church, Saltpond, n.d.(2):2-4
[5] Catholic Church, Saltpond, n.d.(2):6.

station with European priests had failed because of sickness[1], the Saltpond church was again left under the care of the Headmaster for nearly two years[2]. Then, in 1897, with extra funds donated from overseas, the Catholic authorities were able to buy a large piece of land by the Upper Town beach, on which to establish a permanent settlement. Building began upon the arrival of two replacement fathers, but since they and their successors were likewise beset by sickness, the new mission house was not opened until 1898[3]. The present Saltpond Catholic Church was built on this same site in 1927[4]. Thus, today, there is no Catholic Church located in Lower Saltpond itself.

c) The Anglican Church. Although the first Anglican chaplain came to Cape Coast Castle as early as 1683[5], long before the arrival on the Gold Coast of either the Methodist or the Catholic Church, it was more than two centuries before Anglicans turned their attention to evangelism among the African peoples. Even when, in 1886, the "colonial chaplaincy" followed the centre of government in the move it had made 9 years previously to Accra (a second chaplain being stationed at Cape Coast), there was no material change of policy. Such did not occur until 1904, when an Assistant Bishop was appointed and given special responsibility for the Gold Coast and its hinterland. The new Bishop settled himself in the western harbour town of Sekondi, and, before his death in 1909, had directed a thrust of Anglicanism into African townships there, at Cape Coast, and elsewhere[6].

According to local Anglican tradition in Saltpond (subsequently published[7]), several attempts to establish an Anglican church in the town were made, in 1910 and following years, by a small group of church members. These were largely migrants from other towns, who had come to Saltpond as

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[1] Pfann 1965:38-39
[2] Catholic Church, Saltpond, n.d.(2):18; Pfann 1965:44
[3] Pfann 1965:44-45
[4] Catholic Church, Saltpond, n.d.(1):2
[5] Debrunner 1967:52
[6] Debrunner 1967:242-247; see also Jenkins 1974:23-39,177-200
[7] Haizel 1939:417-422.

employees of the administrative service or the various trading companies. However, their early ventures lapsed for lack of support. Not until 1923 were any lasting foundations laid, when the Anglicans in Saltpond secured the active assistance of a local townsman who organised meetings in his own house in Upper Town. Even then, the enterprise remained at constant risk of failure, through its apparent inability to attract a wide base of native townspeople - permanent Saltpond residents - into its fold. For this reason expressly, it was decided to establish an Anglican school, which opened in Upper Town in 1923 and met so keen a need for education that it was quickly over-subscribed (c.f. Chap.2, p.43). In 1939, over 35% of the communicant members were school pupils, and to this day the school provides the church choir and a high proportion of the congregation. Nevertheless, the Anglican congregation still appears to lack a firm basis in the indigenous Saltpond population.

d) The A.M.E. Zion Church. The first origins of the African Methodist Episcopalian Zion Church lie, not in Europe directly, but in the U.S.A., with a group of negro Methodists from New York. This group began to hold it own meetings, separately from white Methodists, in 1796, and joined with other like-minded congregations to form the A.M.E. Zion Church in 1820[1].

The Ghanaian church of that name is a branch of this parent body, but in another sense it can trace its beginnings to developments indigenous to the Gold Coast itself. From this latter point of view, its beginnings lie with the Methodist Church of the 19th century. Its growth was stimulated by the spread of education, and by the development of the new culture of modernism and of political nationalism[2].

Into this ferment, in the late 19th century, came one John Bryan Small, a sergeant in a West Indian regiment which was brought in by the British to serve in the Asante Wars. From 1863 to 1896, Small was stationed at Cape Coast, where he became acquainted with many prominent members of

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[1] Du Bois 1903:45; Debrunner 1967:234-235; Kimble 1963:163,n.1.
[2] Bartels 1965:159-160; Kimble 1963:163.

the new professional "class"[1]. These included the Rev. F. Egyir Asaam, who had been born in Saltpond in 1864[2], and who was then Headmaster of the Wesleyan secondary school (now called Mfantsipim) at Cape Coast. This latter was, at much this time, engaged in a dispute with European Methodist missionaries, about his own conduct in particular, and over control of the Church - whether European or African - in general[3].

After his discharge from the army, Small settled in the U.S.A., ultimately becoming a bishop in the A.M.E. Zion Church[4]. In the meantime, Asaam had resigned both from his ministry and from his position at the school[5], and in 1898 Small appointed him as an elder of the A.M.E. Zion Church and its representative on the Gold Coast[6]. Inaugural meetings were held, by Asaam in Cape Coast, and in Keta by T. Birch Freeman junior, but the new church as yet stagnated. However, in the course of correspondence, Small had offered to provide a scholarship for the Zion theological college in the U.S.A. to a young man of Asaam's choice, who would be expected to return to the Gold Coast in order to organise the church. The beneficiary, F.A.O. Pinanko, one of Asaam's former students, returned in 1903 to hold new inaugural services and to found the first Zion school[7]. In 1911, as it happens, Egyir Asaam returned to the Methodist ministry[8] (in 1913, he became Superintendent Minister at Saltpond, where he died a few months later[9]), but this time the A.M.E. Zion Church had met with lasting success.

Local sources state that the Saltpond branch of the church was started in or about 1925, in Upper Town. They relate little else of note, except that for many years it remained numerically insignificant. As late as 1950, they continue, membership had scarcely reached double figures. But then,

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[1] Debrunner 1967:234
[2] Sampson 1937:73
[3] Debrunner 1967:232-233; Bartels 1965:138-141
[4] Debrunner 1967:234
[5] ibid:233
[6] ibid:235
[7] Debrunner 1967:236; Bartels 1965:160
[8] Debrunner 1967:233
[9] Sampson 1937:76

in the early fifties (the exact date is unclear), there occurred an event in the Upper Town Methodist Church with dramatic repercussions for the local Zion Church. The male leader of the Methodist Singing Band, the women's group which presents vernacular hymns during church services, apparently accused his wife of adultery, and took his case before the church elders. The elders, however, gave their ruling in favour of the wife. The bandmaster, strongly aggrieved, left the Methodists for the Zion Church, to be followed by most of his members, who joined him in a newly-established Zion Singing Band. This gave the real impetus to the A.M.E. Zion Church in Saltpond. A Zion school, also in Upper Town, was started a few years later, in 1956.

e) The Presbyterian Church. There is also in Upper Saltpond a small Presbyterian congregation which, too insignificant to warrant its own resident minister, is supervised by a caretaker-catechist and visited from time to time by the Superintendent Minister from Cape Coast.

The early development of the Presbyterian Church in Ghana was confined to the eastern side of the country, around its two original bases. Of these, one was in Accra, and the other in Akropong, on the Akwapim Ridge[1]. To this day, the bulk of its membership lies in the Akwapim and Akyem areas of the Eastern Region[2].

Nevertheless, by the 1930s, the socioeconomic changes of the 20th century had taken numbers of Presbyterians from their home communities to the increasingly prosperous towns along the railways and coastline. In these new places of residence, they formed themselves once more into congregations of their own[3]. The Saltpond group keeps this character even today. So transient is its membership, that no information is available as to when it came into existence; it presumably dates from some time after the establishment of the Cape Coast group in 1936[4].

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[1]
[2]Smith 1966:38-39
[3]ibid:292
[4]ibid:206-207
ibid:207,n.2.

f) The Musama Disco Christo Church. After the successful founding of the A.M.E. Zion Church under Afro-American guidance at the turn of the 20th century, the next period in the development of Christianity, in this south-western part of Ghana, saw the first of the churches to emerge under entirely African inspiration and leadership. One man generally recognised as bringing a powerful stimulus to this movement was the Liberian "prophet", W.W. Harris, who in 1914 entered the Nzima area in the extreme south-western corner of the Gold Coast. There, he spent a few months preaching against "traditional" religion[1]. His preaching resulted directly in the formation of one of these so-called "separatist" churches, which, because it came relatively late to Saltpond, will be dealt with subsequently (see the Twelve Apostles' Church, pp.149-152). The first African-inspired church apparently to be established in Saltpond itself, was the Musama Disco Christo Church ("The Army of the Cross of Christ Church"[2]). Its immediate origins lie elsewhere.

The founder of the M.D.C.C. was a former Methodist called J.W.E. Appiah, born in about 1893 in the Fante town of Abura Edumfa. Having completed elementary education at Cape Coast, he was employed by the church in 1911 as a teacher-catechist at Abura Abakrampa[3]. In 1914, he resigned his post to pursue a private business venture in the Akyem District in the interior. This failing[4], he returned to mission work, but now among the Gomoa peoples at Dunkwa (the Gomoa are closely related, culturally, to the Fante, of whom he himself was one). Here, he came under the influence of another catechist, who had won fame as a faith-healer and been styled "Prophet". Appiah, too, devoted time to prayer and fasting. Soon, he, too, was claiming to see visions and practising healing[5].

In 1920 (or, as in M.D.C.C. literature, 1919), Appiah was transferred

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[1] Haliburton 1971:1-5,36-38,49-51. See also below, p.149-151
[2] Baeta 1962:36; Jehu-Appiah 1959:7
[3] Baeta 1962:28-29; Jehu-Appiah 1959:1-2
[4] Baeta 1962:29; Jehu-Appiah 1959:1
[5] Baeta 1962:29-31; Debrunner 1967:329; Jehu-Appiah 1959:2.

to the Gomoa state capital of Oguan. Continuing the practice of faith-healing, he attracted a group of followers, whom he organised for ecstatic prayer-meetings. He named them (probably in 1922) as the "Faith Society"[1].

During these years, as earlier in Gomoa Dunkwa, Appiah's Methodist superiors seem to have acquiesced in his activities. Then, in 1923, fresh charges were made against him, and he and his followers were expelled from the church on the grounds of occultism[2]. Following this, Appiah apparently received the "inspiration" to re-establish the society as the independent Musama Disco Christo Church, under the leadership of himself by the new name of Prophet J. Jehu-Appiah and the title of Akaboha[3].

However, the new church met with hostility from a faction of the towns-people of Oguan, and its settlement was attacked by the local asafo companies. Within a year, therefore, it moved to a new site at Gomoa Onyaawonsu[4]. Here again, though, it provoked conflict when, in 1925, the Prophet forbade his members to participate in any "traditional" ritual practices, including asafo activities and town festivals. The settlement was moved again to a site near Gomoa Fomena, and was re-named Mozano[5]. There it remained until after the death of the Prophet in 1948, and the succession of his son as Akaboha II, when the church again came into conflict with its local chief. In 1951, therefore, a new settlement of Mozano was established, on a spacious site near Gomoa Eshiem, where it remains today[6]. When the Akaboha II died in 1972, he was again succeeded by his son[7], this confirming a practice which is particularly notable within a culture where descent and succession are matrilineal.

The precise date of foundation of the local church in Saltpond, Upper Town, is obscure. Church elders claimed to me that it began in the 1920s,

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[1] Baeta 1962:31,36; Debrunner 1967:329-330; Jehu-Appiah 1959:2, 1959:7.
[2] Baeta 1962:30,35; Debrunner 1967:330; Jehu-Appiah 1959:3.
[3] N.B. These sources show slight discrepancies in dating.
[4] Jehu-Appiah 1959:3; Debrunner 1967:330. C.G. Baeta, however (1962:36), puts the re-naming of the "Faith Society" before Appiah's expulsion.
[5] Baeta 1962:35-36; Jehu-Appiah 1959:2, 1971:14.
[6] Baeta 1962:36-37; Debrunner 1967:330; Jehu-Appiah 1959:7.
[7] Baeta 1962:42; Jehu-Appiah 1959:7.
Personal communication from M.D.C.C. at Mozano in 1973.

but independent or documentary evidence was not available. However, a student of the M.D.C.C. has reported that preaching was not carried outside Mozano into other towns, nor pastors appointed to the new congregations, before 1930[1]. It would seem unlikely, therefore, that any proper church organisation was created in the town before that date.

g) The Church of Pentecost. The next stage in the diversification of Christian churches in Saltpond, which might be said to have begun in the 1930s but which did not get fully under way until after the Second War, saw the arrival of a variety of sects of a new type. These drew their inspiration, and sometimes also their leadership, from Europe and America. Most were Pentecostal in character, adopting excitative forms of prayer, and their adherents claiming to "receive the Holy Spirit".

Their influence was first experienced in the Gold Coast through their publications, which began to circulate during the inter-war period[2]. The impetus for this early movement can therefore be attributed largely to the considerable expansion of literacy at that time, although these sects also influenced circles which had not themselves had the benefit of elementary education. Of those which came to Saltpond and still survive, the earliest was the Church of Pentecost, initially known as the Apostolic Church.

The Apostolic Church (whose headquarters to this day are in Bradford, U.K.) came to Ghana in 1937. A group of former correspondents with one of the American churches learnt that, in 1931, a similar group in Lagos had been sent an Apostolic missionary. Thus they, too, wrote requesting a visit for themselves. Eventually, they were sent a missionary of their own, the Rev. J. McKeown, who set up residence in their town of Asamankese in the Eastern Region. McKeown, however, quickly came into dispute with his congregation on the question of the use of medicine in healing. He therefore left the original group, in order to start from scratch in a new location at the coastal town of Winneba, only 35 miles or so east of Saltpond in the (now)

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[1] Baeta 1962:39
[2] Debrunner 1967:321

Central Region. There, he met with more lasting success. The new church, following its deliberate policy, concentrated upon evangelism rather than education. It directed its attention first along the coast, and later inland[1].

I was unable to establish the exact date of foundation of the Saltpond branch in Upper Town (and claims were conflicting), but the most reliable sources set it at between 1945 and 1950. This would certainly be consistent with reports that the Apostolic Church made its real impact on Ghana during the immediate post-war period[2]. Some further confirmation is given by the fact that Saltpond is known to have had, by 1950, one of the three then resident Apostolic European missionaries[3].

It was not many years after this that the church organisation at national level was rent by a dispute which eventually led to the change of name. In 1953, an American missionary by the name of Dr. T. Wyatt came to the Gold Coast, and was welcomed as a preacher within the Apostolic Church. Shortly afterwards, as sources within the church explained, the governing body of the church in Bradford withdrew their support for McKeown, who had been recalled to Europe, apparently on the grounds that it had been unconstitutional to allow the visitor into their churches[4]. At this, a faction in the church which had supported McKeown broke away, followed by a majority of the congregations throughout the country. Re-forming as the Gold Coast Apostolic Church, they then brought McKeown back to the Gold Coast as their head[5]. The smaller group kept the name of Apostolic Church of the Gold Coast[6].

Some time later, Kwame Nkrumah, then Prime Minister of the Gold Coast, ruled that, because of the confusing similarity of their two names, one

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[1] Debrunner 1967:323-325; Wyllie 1974:112-115
[2] Debrunner 1967:325
[3] ibid:325
[4] Wyllie 1974:118-119
[5] Debrunner 1967:325-326; Wyllie 1974:118-119
[6] Debrunner 1967:325

should change. McKeown's organisation therefore became known as the Church of Pentecost[1].

The local church in Saltpond always remained loyal to McKeown, and thus officially bears the new name. There is, however, yet further source of possible misunderstanding, in that, locally, the name "Apostolic Church" is often used in common speech instead of the correct title. No branch of the (now) Apostolic Church of Ghana exists in reality in Saltpond today.

Neither of these two churches should be confused with yet a third, the Christ Apostolic Church, which maintained a branch in Saltpond until just before my arrival in 1973. Some reports speak of the formation of a church by this name as a breakaway group from the Gold Coast Apostolic Church[2]. Former local church leaders, however, while acknowledging some relationship with McKeown's organisation, preferred to trace their origins to a so-called "Full Gospel Church", founded by a Ghanaian from the Volta Region in 1922[3]. These same elders claimed, though here again independent confirmation was not forthcoming, that their own local church was founded in 1938. They also maintained that, although they had closed down "temporarily", they intended to re-start the church as soon as suitable accommodation could be found. However, since this church did not operate at all during the field period, it will not receive separate treatment here.

h) The Assemblies of God. The second Pentecostal church in Saltpond, the Assemblies of God, seems also to have arrived during the post-war period. This church was first organised in the U.S.A., after, as it claims, a number of men and women had "received the Holy Spirit"[4]. Almost at once, they were inspired to direct missionary enterprise into Africa, and one of their representatives was working among returned Afro-Americans in Liberia that same year of 1915[5]. A station was opened at Ouagadougou in 1921[6], and

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[1] Wyllie 1974:120
[2] Debrunner 1967:326; Wyllie 1974:114-116
[3] c.f. Wyllie 1974:107-116
[4] Assemblies of God, n.d.:2
[5] Haliburton 1971:142,n.1
[6] Debrunner 1967:326

twenty years later missionaries from there crossed the border into the Gold Coast to open another at Yendi. By 1937, there were a further four stations, all likewise in the Northern Territories and including one in the growing city of Tamale[1].

Mission sources report that subsequently, southern migrants, who had joined Assemblies of God churches while temporarily resident in the north, began to take their new faith back to their home communities. Thus, in 1945, further stations were opened in the southern cities of Kumasi, Accra and Takoradi, in order to meet the increasing demand[2].

The station at Saltpond was said by informants to have been established shortly afterwards (this fact was never fully confirmed). For many years, it was located on the site of the Bible Institute, which trains African ministers. This was almost as near to Kromantse as to Saltpond, and the church served both communities. In 1973, a new church building was opened, well within the township of Saltpond itself.

i) The Jehovah's Witnesses. The date of formation of the Saltpond band of Jehovah's Witnesses cannot be strictly determined, but it is said to have followed the arrival of a migrant trader, to establish his own business in the town, in 1947 (possibly 1946)[3].

Like so many other churches, the influence of the Jehovah's Witnesses was first felt through their literature, which began to circulate during the 1930s. However, the effective movement of Witnesses in the Gold Coast did not, according to one writer, emerge until after the 1939-45 War[4]. In 1950, apparently, it received further impetus from the publication of the monthly periodical, "Watchtower", in Twi, a language of the interior so closely related to Fante that the two are mutually intelligible.

The founder of the Saltpond group claims to have brought the original members together by his own efforts. Himself a native of Obo Kwahu, in the

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[1]
[2]Assemblies of God, n.d.:2
[3]ibid:2
[4]Personal communication from Mr. Denkyi, Saltpond
Debrunner 1967:321

Eastern Region, he became a Witness, he recalls, while temporarily resident at the Central Region town of Agona Swedru. On coming to Saltpond, he found no fellow-believers in the town, and in accordance with the tenets of his creed, he set about preaching to other people. From these small beginnings, and, so it seems, with the arrival of other Witnesses from outside town, the group came into existence.

j) The Twelve Apostles' Church. The early 1950s opened a new phase in Saltpond Christianity with the coming of yet more African-inspired churches. During this period, though, the expansion occurred in Low Town. Exact dates are difficult to establish, but among the first to arrive was that which is now the largest in Lower Saltpond. This was the Twelve Apostles' Church, founded in about 1953.

The Twelve Apostles' Church claims to have originated as a direct result of the preaching of the Prophet Harris, a Liberian of the Grebo people. During 1913-1914, Prophet Harris, accompanied by a varying number of from two to four wives, swept across the Ivory Coast and into the south-western corner of the Gold Coast, calling upon the people to destroy their "fetishes" and come to be baptised[1]. G.M. Haliburton, a biographer of Harris, has described the movement in its sociopolitical context against a background of "traditional" cultures experiencing the first disintegrating effects of French and British colonialism. In his opinion, the peoples whom Harris visited - beginning to find, when confronted with the superior force of the colonialists, that their old gods could no longer help them - were ready to solicit the supposedly greater spiritual power of the Supreme Being. However, in his view, they were afraid simply to abandon the "traditional" rituals, and thus, as they thought, lay themselves open to the retaliation of the gods and to attacks by witches and evil spirits. Harris himself offered full protection against such forces in an immediate baptism, a step which European missionaries

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[1] Haliburton 1971:1-5,36-38,49-51.

in the area (who insisted upon thorough instruction before baptism) had not been prepared to take[1]. The only rigorous requirement laid down by Harris was the renunciation of the "traditional" gods, although he also drew up a relatively simple moral code for his converts, and sent them, after their baptism, to join a church of their own choice[2]. In villages where no church yet existed, he chose a suitable man to organise prayer-meetings; in addition, he often nominated 11 assistants, who were to be known, collectively with their leader, as the Twelve Apostles of the Church[3]. In subsequent years, spectacular advances were made in the Ivory Coast and in the Gold Coast by both Catholics and Methodists, building upon Harris' work; in the latter country, the Anglicans also profited[4].

It had indeed been from the Gold Coast that, according to Haliburton, much of the early stimulus for Harris' success had come. His outward journey through the Ivory Coast had apparently had little permanent effect, except among the literate English-speaking clerks - predominantly Fante and Nzima - employed by the European trading-companies at stations along the sea-board. (Some of these men subsequently continued his preaching, when he himself moved onwards[5].) Only when he crossed the Gold Coast border to the Nzima peoples, and notably when he reached the Ahanta town of Axim, did he really arouse popular acclaim, attracting, it is said, up to a thousand converts a day. The most eager converts included, most notably, men and women who were themselves priests or priestesses of "traditional" deities[6]. After visiting Axim, Harris seemingly intended to proceed to Sekondi, and on to Kumasi, but instead he had the "inspiration" (possibly as a result of unhappy experiences with Europeans in Axim) to turn back for the Ivory Coast[7]. This time, his reputation going before him, and the

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[1] Haliburton 1971:110-111,114-118
[2] ibid:118-120
[3] ibid:67
[4] ibid:147-148,150-157,166-172,173-188; Jenkins 1974:25
[5] Haliburton 1971:49-51
[6] ibid:71,78-79
[7] ibid:88-89

efforts of his assistants achieving fruition, his preaching met with a wider and more eager reception[1]. This mass movement, however, aroused the apprehension of French officials, occurring as it did in the particularly sensitive early months of the First War. There was an added irritant, in that fringe elements were apparently distorting Harris' teachings into an anti-French ideology. Consequently, the decision was taken to suppress the movement. Harris was arrested and deported home to Liberia in December 1914. At the same time, a number of his Nzima and Fante subordinates were sent back to the Gold Coast[2].

Among these was Grace Tanne[3], who, with another Harris convert, John Nackabah, is acknowledged by the present Twelve Apostles' Church as its "pioneer" (its "founder" is taken to be Harris himself)[4]. Grace Tanne is reputed to have been a "traditional" priestess from an Nzima coastal village, who was baptised by Harris at or near Axim. After this, she reputedly travelled with him to the Ivory Coast as one of his wives, joining with the other women to lead the singing at his meetings with an accompaniment of beaded calabash-rattles. Once back in the Gold Coast, she continued to arrange meetings in the Harris manner with a group of followers, though Haliburton comments:

> "Their aim was the exorcism of evil spirits, which to them was the meaningful part of the Prophet Harris's work. Naturally, they charged clients fees for their services."

He goes on to describe how the emphasis turned to a healing-service, using a ritual of water-carrying and spirit-possession (see Chap.6, pp.196-198)[5].

John Nackabah was probably an imitator of Tanne, and a sometime collaborator with her. Illiterate, like she, Nackabah founded a church at the inland Ahanta village of Essuawah, and, with the help of educated assistants, gradually built up a network of out-stations. These he designated

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[1] Haliburton 1971:93-94
[2] ibid:122-130,132-136,138-143
[3] ibid:141n.
[4] ibid:150
[5] Haliburton 1971:148-150. See also Baeta 1962:9,23-25; Debrunner 1967:273.

as the Twelve Apostles' Mission[1]. After Nackabah's death, a breakaway group apparently set up headquarters of its own at Kadjabir, near Sekondi. This organisation has claimed a network of branches, divided into four districts, each of which is supposed to have its own head-station. However, C.G. Baeta, who published this statement, reports that there is no overall organisation between districts. Indeed, from the information so far available, it is impossible to assess whether all the districts were ever formally connected[2].

The prophet at the Twelve Apostles' Church in Low Town, Saltpond, recognises the church a mile away at Kromantse (Kormantine) as his head-station. He also acknowledges connections, of an undefined nature, with another establishment near Sekondi. This is consistent with the pattern of organisation of the "Fante District" of the Twelve Apostles' Church described by Baeta[3]. It seems clear, therefore, that the Saltpond branch is a further example of the very similar church which Baeta himself deals with, in some detail but largely in general terms[4].

The same Saltpond prophet, himself a native of Nankesedo,

put the opening of the Low Town out-station at 1953. This was some three years before he took charge himself, as still a young man, in 1956. He claims before that to have been an Anglican (the grounds for this former affiliation were obscure; Anglicans are rare in Low Town, and he had not to my knowledge attended the Anglican school, or any other). His father, however, had apparently been one of Prophet Harris' first converts; he was, indeed, at the time of the interview, said to be in charge of a Twelve Apostles' Church in the Ivory Coast[5]. The identity of the first prophet at Saltpond, and what became of him, was never made clear to me.

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[1] Haliburton 1971:149-150

[2] Baeta 1962:11. Compare Debrunner 1967:273; Haliburton 1971:150

[3] Baeta 1962:11

[4] ibid:9-25

[5] It cannot be assumed that his church would fall within the same overall organisation as the Saltpond group; many of the original Twelve Apostles' Churches in the Ivory Coast finally joined into an "Eglise Harriste", which now occurs in more than one faction (Haliburton 1971:177,208-209). My informant was not at all specific as to which type he was speaking of.

k) The African Faith Tabernacle Congregation Church. At much the same time as the formation of the local Twelve Apostles, a second African-inspired church opened in Low Town. This was the African Faith Tabernacle Congregation Church, known more commonly, locally, by the surname of the Prophet James Kwame Nkansah, whom it acknowledges as its founder. This church was, according to H.W. Debrunner, yet another to emerge under the stimulus of fundamentalist literature from overseas. Debrunner traces its roots to the "Faith Tabernacle Congregation" of Philadelphia, U.S.A., whose pamphlets, he reports, are still distributed at its Ghanaian headquarters in Akyem Abuakwa Anyinam[1]. However, no more personal assistance has ever apparently been received from its American contacts. The ideology of the Ghanaian church is said to differ from that of its foreign namesake, in that it emphasises the importance of evil spirits and witchcraft as causes of disease.

The meagre information given by C.G. Baeta[2] concerning the existence of the church as from 1919, prior to the accession of the Prophet Nkansah, appeared to be quite unknown to my own local sources. These latter- vague, in any case, about its history - put the origin of the church in the 1930s, and dated its arrival in Saltpond at about 1954.

This church apparently maintains an effective organisation linking its branches with headquarters, and pastors are expected to meet periodically for prayer with the Prophet at Anyinam.

The present pastor in Low Town, who is a native not of Saltpond but of Biriwa, 9 miles westwards along the coast, tells how he first came to the church because he was sick. On recovery, he joined the church, and was subsequently ordained. In 1964, when the former pastor was transferred to Kromantese, he himself was left in charge at Low Town.

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[1] Debrunner 1967:323-324
[2] Baeta 1962:113-114

1) Prophet I.K. Prah's Life and Salvation Church. One of the African-inspired churches in Saltpond is rather different from the others, in that it is the headquarters of its organisation rather than an out-station. This is Prophet Prah's Divine Healing and Miracle Ministry, alternatively known as the Life and Salvation Church, which maintains a large healing camp on a tract of land almost at the very outskirts of Saltpond, on the road to Kromantse.

To date, written information about this organisation has not been widely available. However, in unpublished documents issued by his church, Prophet Prah, a native of Abadze, 5 miles west of Saltpond, relates how, after a series of dreams and visions between 1937 and 1950, he left his former employment with Ghana Railways[1]. Subsequently, according to local sources, he worked as a driver at Abadze, until he came into conflict with the authorities and suffered a term in prison. The Prophet himself has often testified, at his services, as to how he was "delivered from unjust imprisonment by the power of God". Be that as it may, many people believe that he emerged with the power of healing - or, as the pronouncements of his church put it[2]:

> "He saw the Lord Jesus Christ who baptised him with the Holy Spirit and Healing Power and (he) began speaking in another tongue".

He began his new work in January 1958.

After apparently preaching for a while in Kumasi, he set up the healing camp in Saltpond, to which he admitted those who came soliciting his help. Some of those who successfully received healing at his hands were encouraged to enter the growing ministry of the church, which gradually built up a network of branches, these mostly in the Central Region. In 1973, the time of this research, they numbered 38.

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[1] Prah n.d.: unpub.ms.(2)
[2] Prah n.d.: unpub.ms.(1)

m) The Church of Christ Spiritual Movement. The Church of Christ Spiritual Movement, the most recent of the African-inspired churches to come to Low Town, was a breakaway group from the Apostolic Church (see (g) above, pp.145-147). This was founded at Cape Coast by the Prophet John Mensah. Here again, little information has been published about the organisation. However, a biography of the founder issued by the Cape Coast headquarters (which was seen by me in a not fully complete version) tells how, as a young man, John Mensah left his home-village, near Lake Bosomtwe in Asante Region, where, though quite uneducated, he had been an enthusiastic Methodist. Moving south to Cape Coast, he completed an apprenticeship as a motor driver, and, by the Second War, was apparently running a fleet of three lorries. This venture failed in 1953[1].

Some time previously, when his business worries were still accumulating, he had gone on the recommendation of a friend to the Apostolic Church, only to be told by the European missionary then in charge that he must divorce one of his two wives before he could become a full member of the church. The biography records the reluctance with which Mensah agreed to this action, a decision which he made only when his difficulties were reaching their climax and which it is by no means clear that he ever put into effect[2]. After the business collapse, and undecided as to how to earn his living, Mensah left Cape Coast to spend a period of fasting and prayer in the forest. On his return, he is said to have received ordination from the European pastor of the Apostolic Church, in recognition of the working of the Holy Spirit within him. He claimed later, if not at the time, to have received the powers of prophecy at that point. The manuscript includes accounts of visions seen by Mensah during these months[3].

At about the beginning of 1954, Mensah initiated a prayer group with a

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[1] de-Wilson, n.d.:5,11-12
[2] ibid:5-6
[3] ibid:6-9

handful of friends in his own rooms[1]. Later, as the biography continues:

> "Being fully filled with the Spirit, he had the inspiration to heal the sick in the church room."

Apparently, at the time, he won the pastor's consent to his action[2]. The manuscript claims that he performed this work for two months with spectacular success, attracting an extensive following.

The manuscript in my possession is silent on the events leading to the final split between Prophet John and the (by then) Church of Pentecost. It reports him as banishing evil spirits for a supplicant in 1956[3], but also suggests (as was supported by not always reliable sources from Saltpond) that the church was not formally constituted until December 1958[4]. Since then, it claims to have opened out-stations at a large number of towns, including Kumasi, and others in the Ivory Coast[5].

The Church of Christ congregation in Lower Saltpond grew up around a small group of Low Towners, who had previously attended the Apostolic Church - now the Church of Pentecost - in Upper Town. On the occasion of Prophet John's defection, they apparently broke away to form their own separate branch of his new church. This is run by a Low Town woman, who bases her claims to recognition upon her baptism by the Apostolic pastor from Cape Coast, on the beach at Saltpond, in (she says) 1939. She also cites some spectacular prayer-healing which, she says, she accomplished on a journey to Abidjan in the Ivory Coast. Before that time, she had been accredited by the Movement as a Church Worker, but these achievements led to her ordination by Prophet John, in 1962, with the official status of Divine Healer.

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[1] de-Wilson, n.d.:12,17
[2] ibid:18
[3] ibid:27
[4] ibid:40
[5] ibid:33,40

n) The Church of the Lord ("Aladura"). The Church of the Lord, located in the section of Upper Town known as Eguabadu, traces its origins to the Nigerian prayer-healing "Aladura" church. This provides its alternative, and more commonly used, name. The Aladura "praying" churches in Nigeria are said to have arisen in 1928, also under the influence of Faith Tabernacle literature from America[1], and to have subsequently spread into the Gold Coast in 1931[2]. The Ghanaian organisation is now independent of Nigeria, and has since split into two separate bodies[3]. Of these, the Saltpond branch recognises the Accra group as its headquarters.

The Saltpond out-station was opened in 1964 by the previous pastor. The present incumbent, who is a native and resident of Kromantse, joined the church after approaching it with a request which was, he says, granted in great measure. He took over himself in about 1968, when his predecessor moved away.

o) Other Christian Churches. Also operating in Upper Saltpond is an out-station of the Calvary Healing Temple, whose headquarters are believed by the writer to be at Gomoa Ankamu, near Apam, in the Central Region, but about which nothing further was learnt. A branch of the Negritan Episcopalian Church[4], founded in Cape Coast in 1918, has been defunct for some years.

2. Islam. At much the same time as the first Christian missionaries were reaching the Gold Coast, the Moslem religion was apparently beginning to establish itself in the area. According to H.J. Fisher, it filtered in during the early 1800s, both from the north, and across the southern coastline with returning ex-slaves[5]. This new faith seems, however, to have had only a relatively muted impact upon the indigenous peoples of the south, at least until the latter part of the century.

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[1] [2] Parrinder 1969:152
[3] Baeta 1962:119
[4] ibid:119
[5] Debrunner 1967:323; Kimble 1963:169
Fisher 1963:117

The turning point, in this respect, came with the series of Asante Wars, and its associated population movements and turmoil. It is reported that, in 1872, a cleric arrived from Nigeria to minister to Moslem Hausa troops serving in the war. A few years later, in about 1885, he apparently converted two Fante, one a trader and former Methodist catechist from the village of Egya, and the other a Chief of Ekumfi Ekrawfo (sometimes Ekrofol)[1]. Thereafter, it is said, Islam expanded rapidly among school-educated Fante involved in one role or another with overseas commerce, in other words, within much the same sector as that in which Christianity was beginning to flourish.

Indeed, as Fisher comments[2]:

> "the differences between Islam and Christianity were not emphasised".

Preaching was conducted in English, with the use of the Bible. Fante Moslems, moreover, retained the progressive outlook of the coastal culture and of their own upbringing. (One of their ventures was to open their own - if short - lived - school, in Ekrofol in 1896.) Thus, their movement was from its inception different in character from the conservative Islam of the north.

During this period, northern clerics used to visit the Fante Moslems as well as the northern immigrants of the same religion. It comes as no surprise to learn, however, that the Fante progressives and their teachers soon came into conflict. For a while, the orthodox position prevailed (it was probably mainly for this reason that the school was closed down in 1908)[3]. Eventually, though, this cleavage led to the arrival of what is now the dominant form of Islam among the Fante, namely, the Ahmadiyya Movement.

a) The Ahmadiyya Movement. During these early years of the 20th century, Islam was represented among Fante residents in most of the southern commercial towns, including Saltpond. Ekrofol remained a centre of the

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[1] Ahmadiyya Movement 1961:1
[2] Fisher 1963:117
[3] ibid:117-118

faith. In 1920, according to Ahmadiyya traditions, one of their number - a relative of one of the two founders, who came originally from Ekrofol but was then resident at Mankesim - dreamed that he was praying with white men[1]. He apparently discussed his dream with a Nigerian Moslem living in Saltpond, and was told about the Ahmadiyya version of Islam.

This was a breakaway movement, formed in 1889 under (then) Indian leadership. Orthodox Moslems regarded it as heretical, because of its recognition of its Indian founder, Ghulam Ahmad, as the Mahdi[2]. Nevertheless, during the previous decade, it had been sending literature to a group of progressive Moslems in Lagos.

Fante Moslems were now called to a meeting at Mankesim, where they agreed to invite an Ahmadi to establish the Movement on the Gold Coast. After a short delay while funds were being raised, the pioneer missionary Alhaj Abdul Rahim Nayyar arrived through Saltpond harbour in 1921, and it is reported that his preaching successfully converted almost all the Fante Moslems to Ahmadiyya Islam[3]. Shortly afterwards, in 1922, a successor arrived to establish permanent headquarters at Saltpond. This site was chosen because of the ease of its overseas communications, and because of its central position with respect to the membership in the hinterland. The first specifically Ahmadiyya school was opened in the town in 1923[4].

At the time of this research, in 1973, the Ahmadiyya national headquarters were still in Saltpond, together with a missionary training institute for West Africans, and an elaborate mosque. However, the location had by then become inconvenient, following the closure of the harbour and the decline of the town. Plans were being made for a move to Accra.

b) Orthodox Moslems. As implied in the previous section, Islam on the Gold Coast was practised in its early days, not only by indigenous Fante, but also by immigrants from northern areas drawn to the south by the

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[1] Ahmadiyya Movement 1961:2; Fisher 1963:118
[2] Fisher 1963:ix
[3] Ahmadiyya Movement 1961:2-3; Fisher 1963:118
[4] Ahmadiyya Movement 1961:3; Fisher 1963:119

growing commercial opportunities. Initially, there was a degree of cooperation between the two groups, in spite of their fundamental difference in outlook. However, missionary Nayyar's message, which so overwhelmingly swayed the Fante Moslems, made no appeal to the northerners on the coast. These latter rejected his innovations, and continued to support their own maliki sects[1].

In Saltpond, as in most West African towns, there is a separate quarter of the town - here known as the zongo - where northern immigrants live[2]. These people are often popularly referred to as Hausas, some of whom they certainly include. Predominantly, though, they are migrants from Northern Ghana - largely Dagomba, Grunshi and Sisala - with the addition of certain other peoples - Wangara, Zabarama, and Fulani - from states in the savannah belt. The Saltpond northerners form a Moslem community quite apart from the Ahmadis, with their own mosque in the zongo and their own religious leaders. I was unable to determine the local history of orthodox Islam in Saltpond, though it is in fact probable that its origins pre-date the formal establishment of the Ahmadiyya Movement in the town.

The topic of Islam in the Fante areas would in itself provide a most profitable field for further research. Here, though, it must be passed over, in favour of the real subject of this study, Christianity.

3. Christian Doctrines in Saltpond: a Classification of the Christian Churches. The present chapter has traced the way in which the various Christian churches operating in Saltpond in 1973 first became established in the town. From these discussions, it has become apparent that different organisations differ strikingly in their practices and attitudes. Nevertheless, certain of the churches may be shown to have important characteristics in common.

This emerges from Fig. 5.1 (p.161). To begin with, of those five which were established in Ghana by or very shortly after the turn of the 20th century, four derive their inspiration directly from Europe and the fifth

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[1] Fisher 1963:118

[2] c.f. Schildkrout 1978

Fig.5.1. Christian churches in Saltpond: history and classificatory type.

	Upper Saltpond							Lower Saltpond						
	Date of foundation in Saltpnd	Date of foundation in Ghana	Origin of initial inspiration	Manager of local school	Member of Ghana Christn Council	Type		Date of foundation in Saltpnd	Date of foundation in Ghana	Origin of initial inspiration	Manager of local school	Member of Ghana Christn Council	Type
Methodist Church	c.1839	1835	Europe	Yes	Yes	Estab.	Methodist Chapel	C.19th	1835	Europe	No	Yes	Estab.
Catholic Church	1890	1880	Europe	Yes	Yes	Estab.							
Anglican Church	1923	1904	Europe	Yes	Yes	Estab.							
A.M.E. Zion Church	c.1925	1903	U.S.A.	Yes	Yes	Estab.							
Presbyterian Church	c.1936	1835	Europe	No	Yes	Estab.							
Musama Disco Christo Church	c.1930s	1923	Africa	No	No	Afr.							
Church of Pentecost	1945-50	1937	Europe	No	No	Fund.							
Assemblies of God	1945-50	1941	U.S.A.	No	No	Fund.							
Jehovah's Witnesses	c.1950	c.1945	U.S.A.	No	No	Fund.							
							Twelve Apostles' Ch.	c.1953	c.1914	Africa	No	No	Afr.
							African Faith Tabernacle Ch.	c.1954	c.1930	Africa	No	No	Afr.
Prophet Prah's Life & Salvation Ch.	1958	1958	Africa	No	No	Afr.							
							Church of Christ Spiritual Movement	c.1958	c.1958	Africa	No	No	Afr.
Church of the Lord	1964	1931	Africa	No	No	Afr.							

Estab:Establishment
Fund: Fundamentalist
Afr: African

is an American splinter-movement from a European foundation. Four of these five are concerned in the management of schools in Saltpond, but no other Christian churches in the town have taken on this responsibility. All five churches now belong to the national-level organisation known as the Ghana Christian Council; none of the other churches are members. With the possible exception of one of them, the five churches in question were all established in Saltpond before any of the other Christian organisations came on to the scene.

There is a second set of churches which have also drawn their inspiration from Europe or the U.S.A., but which do not belong to the Christian Council. None of these runs a school in Saltpond. They arose in Ghana during the late 1930s or early 1940s, and came to Saltpond in the late 1940s or early 1950s.

Like these, the third group of churches do not belong to the Ghana Christian Council. Unlike them, however, they have drawn their inspiration not from overseas, but from Africa itself. This movement for an African version of Christianity first expressed itself locally, in Upper Saltpond, in the 1930s. In Low Town, it was not felt until the 1950s.

Thus, the different churches in Saltpond fall into three categories. It can be shown, further, that there is a notable difference between the official doctrines and attitudes of the churches in the different groups.

For instance, the first set of churches - those belonging to the Ghana Christian Council - are, for the most part, those which were involved in missionary activity during the 19th century. They were brought together by an increasing realisation of the advantages to be gained from cooperation rather than rivalry, this expressing itself in the world ecumenical movement of the early 20th century[1]. The Christian Council of the (then) Gold Coast was formed in 1929[2], its members agreeing to work for fellowship

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[1] Rouse & Neill 1967:366-367

[2] Debrunner 1967:337. The founder members were the Anglican, the A.M.E. Zion, Methodist and (two) Presbyterian Churches. There have been later accessions, including that of the Catholic Church in the 1960s.

among themselves, and, without hindrance to each other, for the conversion of non-Christians. They also undertook to exchange ideas on religious, social and moral questions, with the aim of finding a common voice[1]. These churches stand in the broad tradition of European Christendom, no matter whether they impart Protestant or Catholic interpretations. They encourage literacy, the sine qua non of private Bible study, and for this reason work directly in the field of education, regarding schooling as one of the most effective methods of evangelisation. On social issues, their teaching allows virtually no compromise between "traditional" African practice and what they regard as essential Christian principles, wherever the two are divergent.

Of the second set of churches, it is notable that two of the three - the Church of Pentecost and the Assemblies of God Church - are Pentecostal in character. Both belong to the so-called Ghana Evangelical Fellowship[2], and both hold a belief in "Baptism by the Spirit" as a sign of salvation. This is considered to occur in the form of the spiritual experience known as "speaking in tongues" (the "Pentecostal experience"). The Jehovah's Witnesses, on the other hand, do not regard this as essential for salvation, and, indeed, do not induce the event. The Jehovah's Witnesses are rather different, too, in the nature of their messianic doctrines, treating the Second Coming of Christ, not as a bodily return to a millenial rule, like the two Pentecostals, but rather as an invisible presence.

However, there are strong uniformities between all three churches on other scores. All, for instance, share a belief in the efficacy of divine healing. All regard evangelism, as such, to be a more necessary duty than the provision of education. More importantly, they are most basically in accord in their attitude to the Bible, all regarding it as, in its entirety, divinely inspired and of unquestionable authority. This leads them to reject beliefs and practices in other churches which they consider to be instances of apostasy. It is from this standpoint that they hold back from the Ghana

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[1] Parsons 1967:173
[2] Wyllie 1974:109

Christian Council and other embodiments of the ecumenical movement, declining to connect themselves with - as one of their ministers put it - "idolatry and sin". In this connection, they appear to be especially concerned that participation would draw them into contact with the Roman Catholic Church.

At least as much as they censure the denominations which belong to the Christian Council, the above three churches condemn the remaining non-member sects in the town. These African-inspired churches show rather more diversity among themselves than do those in either of the categories already mentioned. Although, like all other avowedly Christian bodies, they confess to belief in the spiritual existence of the partakers in the Christian Trinity - Almighty God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit - they vary in the emphasis they devote in their worship to the individual beings. Some, for instance, give particular attention to the second of these; others are almost wholly concerned with the third. The churches also vary, perhaps most strikingly, in the extent to which they have formulated precise doctrines. Some have drawn up systematic codes of belief and practice, in written form, whereas others rely upon the oral transmission of tenets which are not always consistent one with another. It would undoubtedly be possible, for certain purposes, to make further distinctions within this category.

Nevertheless, important uniformities are apparent which justify their being dealt with together. For instance, African-inspired churches generally differ from the other Christian organisations in the conceptions which they hold concerning the character of the beings of the Trinity. Most notably, Almighty God is regarded not only as a God of Salvation in the next world, but also as one who can provide for the immediate needs in this. Only in one of these churches was there any mention of messianic beliefs, and even here this aspect took a lesser place to others.

The main concern in all these churches is with healing. All hold beliefs in the possibility of miraculous cures by the power of God (either deriving

from Him directly, or transmitted through some intermediate spiritual agency). All, for this end, take specific and concentrated action, including the provision of prayer, and the laying on of hands, on behalf of individual supplicants. In this context, the Holy Spirit is regarded as particularly important, for usually its activity within the pastor is thought to confer the gift of healing. Its activity within the patient is thought, in some churches, to enable the healing to take place. Sometimes, as well, the act of healing is thought to be brought about by the expulsion of other spirits of an evil character. Either way, possession by the Spirit is generally commended, and often deliberately sought.

There is much here that the Pentecostals might well accept. On the other hand, the African-inspired churches pay little regard to the Pentecostals' belief that the coming of the Spirit is an important sign of future salvation. Moreover, some of their practices, which are intended to induce this same coming of the Spirit, are condemned by the Pentecostals as nothing less than "heathen".

The underlying principle differentiating the African-inspired churches from the Pentecostals arises, again, in their respective attitudes to the Bible. The former, indeed, differ even among themselves. One, for instance - the Twelve Apostles Church - , rarely makes use of the Bible as a text for exposition, but employs it rather as a ritual object which can be manipulated in order to induce possession by the Holy Spirit (see Chap.6, pp.196-197). In all other such churches in Saltpond, however, the Bible is read aloud, and its applicability to the lives of the congregation is elucidated. Some churches tend to focus upon single Biblical verses taken out of context, but this practice itself is probably connected to the view - typical of these organisations - that the Bible is wholly authoritative.

This is an attitude which, at first sight, would appear to be similar to that of the Pentecostals, were it not for two qualifications. Firstly, the African-inspired churches have felt free to rely on the Old Testament,

no less than the New, over certain tendentious social issues such as the question of polygyny. This has enabled them to take up a position which sets them in opposition to the Pentecostals no less than it disqualifies them from the Christian Council. Secondly, and perhaps even more pertinently, the African-inspired organisations believe that God reveals Himself, not only through the Scriptures, but also through personal visions and dreams. To these groups, therefore, the authority of the Bible is at least equalled by the authority of "divine inspiration". It is this "inspiration" which has, in general, motivated the beliefs and practices which the churches in the other two categories condemn as a falling away from God's calling.

Thus, as the above paragraphs indicate, the three sets of churches distinguished earlier - on grounds, largely, of history and organisation - show broad but distinct differences in their official doctrines, which correspond with the other principal variations. Chapter 6, which follows, will outline further corresponding differences in their ritual practices. The three categories may clearly be regarded as discrete types for the purposes of classification.

Most writers on the subject have recognised the validity of these classificatory types, although a variety of terminologies have been proposed in order to refer to them. For instance, the churches in the first category - those which in Ghana belong to the Christian Council - have been termed by C.G. Baeta the "historical churches"[1]. Geoffrey Parrinder, on the other hand, describes them, at times, as the "orthodox churches"[2], or else as the "older mission churches"[3]. The label "mission church", as such, is applied by him equally to organisations of the second type[4]. These latter groups are often known as "Pentecostal", or sometimes as "evangelical", churches[5].

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[1] Baeta 1962:2
[2] Parrinder 1953:104
[3] ibid:107
[4] ibid:86-106
[5] c.f. Rouse & Neill 1967:686-687; Kruger 1970:59.

The African-inspired organisations are widely termed "separatist" (as they are by Parrinder[1] and Baeta[2]), or sometimes "independent" (as by Sundkler[3]). In Ghana, as Baeta points out, they are popularly mis-termed the "spiritual" churches.

Virtually all the available terms have short-comings; they tend to be either ambiguous, not mutually exclusive, or else somewhat derogatory. In the present study, it has been thought best to name the three categories of Christian churches as "Establishment", "Fundamentalist" and "African" respectively. The character of each local church in Saltpond may be seen by reference to Fig. 5.1 (p.161).

It is interesting to note from the discussion in this chapter (see also Fig. 5.1) that the churches of the three different types arrived in Saltpond during different, successive, historical periods. The reason for this, undoubtedly, lies in the fact that the different types of Christianity appealed to different socioeconomic groupings. These either crystallised, or else became receptive to Christianity, at different times. The following chapter will show that, in the present day, the churches of different types are patronised by persons of correspondingly different "class" status.

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[1] Baeta 1962:1
[2] Sundkler 1961:38-64; Sundkler, however, also uses the term "separatist".
[3] Baeta 1962:1

Chapter 6. CHRISTIAN RITUAL AND CHURCH MEMBERSHIP.

The previous chapter has charted, from a historical perspective, the arrival and growth of the different Christian churches operating in Saltpond in 1973. In carrying out this task, it found, further, that the churches could be classified into three types, on the basis of differences in doctrines, attitudes, and certain organisational features. These three types were termed Establishment, Fundamentalist, and African.

The present chapter will be concerned with the question: who belongs to which type of church, and why? As in Chapter 5, and for the same reasons, though the focus of attention centres upon the Upper Town population, neither Low Town churches nor Low Town people can wholly escape mention.

It is necessary to note that the ideological differences between the different types of churches, which were discerned in the last chapter, are not always clearly understood by the Saltpond people. Indeed, the very members of the churches concerned are often little better informed as to the precise nature of their respective doctrines than are total outsiders. The varying characters of the different churches are more immediately apparent from the manner of their public worship. Thus, the following pages will include a descriptive treatment of the various kinds of services adopted by the Saltpond churches. For the most part, churches of the same type favour ritual of a somewhat similar character. One example only, therefore, from any single category - or, at most, two - will be dealt with in full here. (Brief indication will be added of any noteworthy divergences shown by other churches of the same type.) These passages will indicate, more clearly than as yet, the options which individuals may choose between when selecting a particular church.

However, church affiliation is not entirely a matter for free choice. Principles exist which are widely recognised as governing, "by custom", the church to which an individual should belong. Shortly, there will be a

discussion of the way in which these principles operate, and of their consequences for the matrilineal group when they are strictly followed. In some circumstances, though, as will be indicated below, the principles are simply set aside; church affiliation is then determined by other factors. It will be the conclusion of this chapter that the most significant of these factors is the individual's "class" status. ("Class", remember, was shown in Chapter 2 to be an increasingly important feature of contemporary social organisation.)

Before proceeding to these discussions, it will be useful to consider what is meant at all by the concept of "church membership".

1. Degrees of Church "Membership": the Problem of Quantification.

Students of Christianity inevitably encounter the problem of the variety of meanings which may be attached to the concept of church "membership". To begin with, differing applications of the term by original informants often bring about confusion. Beyond this, variations in usage by commentators themselves frequently undermine the comparability of their studies.

There is little prospect for the development of any standard usage to resolve this problem, for the different interpretations have relevance in different contexts. The only solution, and that merely partial, lies in clear definition of the meanings covered by the term "member", in each particular piece of work.

The problem generally arises in the first place because of the fact that more people claim to be Christians, and even to be adherents of particular denominations, than the number who actively participate in the affairs of the churches in question. People in the wider category, who strictly speaking should not be regarded as church members at all, have commonly been described as "professed" Christians. It is these who, in Ghana, are usually referred to in any census data dealing with religion[1]. They will be described here as "professed" members of the various churches.

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[1] c.f. Census of Ghana 1960, Special Report E:4.11, lxxxi-lxxxii; 6.19,cvi.

In this particular study, an additional problem of quantification was met in the field itself. An attempt was made to collect membership figures from the different churches in the town, in order to assess their relative numerical strengths, but the data obtained were found to be non-comparable. Records of membership were in some cases poorly maintained, or even not kept at all. In other cases, they were kept on differing bases; some, for instance, made the distinction between adults and children, whereas others included disproportionate numbers of school pupils without discrimination. In order to obtain comparisons of any validity, therefore, it was decided to use figures expressing the numerical size of actual congregations, a quantity which could be directly observed (see Fig.6.1, p.178)[1].

In following up this procedure, it was found, in many cases, that the numbers registered with a particular church exceeded the number who regularly attended its services, perhaps by as many again. Here, too, it will be useful to make a distinction in terminology. Persons who attend services regularly, and these only, will be described as "active" members of their respective churches (the term "regularly" will not be strictly defined, but will be understood to require more than attendance merely at Christmas and Easter, or for funerals). Those who are registered with a church, but who do not attend "regularly", will be referred to as "nominal" members of their denominations.

Having dealt with these initial problems of definition, it is now possible to discuss the principles by which religious allegiances of all persuasions have been "customarily" determined.

2. "Customary" Principles of Religious Allegiance, and Other Determining Factors. People in contemporary Saltpond insist, overwhelmingly, that it is the "custom" for children to follow in the religion of their father. This

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[1] For this, averages were taken covering several occasions (not including feast-days or funerals, when congregations are swelled by temporarily-returned migrants and outside sympathisers). The data relate only to those of above school age, i.e. 16 years and upwards, these forming the population which is the main interest here.

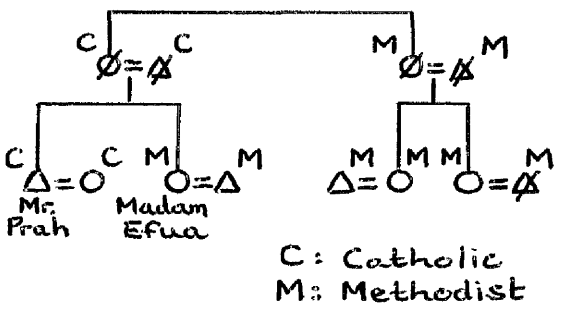
principle, they claim, operates no matter whether the father is Christian, Moslem, or pagan. Nowadays, however, the number of those admitting to paganism is small, except among the very elderly (this is even the case in the Low Town fishing community, which many in Saltpond regard as less developed). The topic of Islam falls largely beyond the scope of the present work. Thus, the "customary" rule must be discussed primarily in terms of its governance of Christian church membership.

Informants also assert that it is the practice for wives to put aside their own religious attachments at marriage, and to assume those of their husbands. Normally, so the local people say, no constraint is placed upon either men or women to marry within their own churches.

If these rules were invariably followed, and if they operated within an entirely closed system, there could be no development of new religions, nor any decline of old ones. However, certain changes are introduced by newcomers to the town. More importantly, perhaps, others occur when the "customary" principles are, on occasion, ignored. The rules are, indeed, often expounded most forcefully by those whose church "membership" is merely professed, rather than active. It would be untrue to suggest that the number of active church members does not include a high proportion who came to their churches in the "customary" way. Nevertheless, it is also a fact that many with this degree of involvement joined through more personal motives, as will be shown by case studies in both this and later sections of the present chapter. The first case, however, illustrates the working of the "customary" principles in the expected manner (the names in this case, and in all which follow, are pseudonyms):-

Case 1. Christianity and the "customary" principles of religious allegiance: a household in Upper Saltpond.

Mr. Prah is an elderly man from a native Upper Saltpond matrilineage, who in his childhood received a good elementary education to Standard VI. He is now occupied in his own business interests. For some years, he has lived in his own house in Upper Town, with his wife, with several of his sisters and female



matrilineal cousins, and with a number of their children, adult and otherwise. The inhabitants of the house regard him as household head, and indeed he is lineage head (ebusuapanyin) to a minor descent group, some of whose members live in other houses.

Mr. Prah is an active member of the Catholic Church, attending regularly and singing in the church choir. In so doing, he follows his father, now deceased. His mother, herself also long dead, apparently gave up at her marriage the Methodist faith in which she had been reared, and took on the Catholic faith of her husband.

Mr. Prah's full sisters, like himself, were brought up as Catholics. Some have married Catholics, and have reputedly remained as such (all happened to be living with their husbands away from Saltpond). Others have become Methodist upon marriage, including one, Madam Efua, who lives permanently in Mr. Prah's house.

This household, therefore, consisting mostly of members of a single minor matrilineage, includes both Catholics and Methodists. (There are also other members with more diverse allegiances; see, for instance, Case 18, p.192).

The second case to be quoted here gives an example of the "customary" principles determining an attachment to orthodox Islam. This is included for the sake of its sheer interest, even though the man in question belongs to Low Town rather than Upper Town. It is most unusual to find other than Ahmadiyya Moslems among the Fante:-

Case 2. Mallam Ahmed. Mallam Ahmed belongs by birth to a native Lower Saltpond matrilineage, and lives in that settlement in a lineage-owned house. He belongs to the orthodox group of Moslems, which is supported almost entirely by the northern immigrants living in the zongo.

Mallam Ahmed's father was, in fact, a Moslem migrant from Mali, who came to trade in the south, and married a Fante woman from Low Town. The son was brought up in the same faith, and indeed was taken north to Mali for an Arabic education. This, claims Mallam Ahmed, has given him the knowledge to practise as a spiritual healer of sicknesses caused by the evil spirits known by Moslems as djin.

He is now in his middle years, and lives as a Fante. He has two wives, both themselves Fante, one of whom lives with him, and the other, in a house of her own lineage, nearby. Some of his nine children live in the same house as himself, with his sisters and his sisters' children.

In accordance with the "customary" principles, all his own children are being brought up as orthodox Moslems. His sisters' children, though living in the same house, are not.

In the above two examples, the "customary" principles have achieved their full effect. However, as mentioned earlier, they are not always

followed. The next case quoted is one - not uncommon - where their force has been overridden by the influence of education:-

> Case 3. Miss Joyce Owusu. Miss Joyce Owusu, aged 18, is the daughter of the Prophet at a successful African church in Upper Saltpond. She is, as yet, unmarried. Neither her father nor her mother are natives of Saltpond, but come from other Fante towns a few miles distant. Nevertheless, they are both resident in Saltpond, and Miss Owusu lives there, too, when she is not away at her Catholic secondary school at Cape Coast.
>
> Miss Owusu does not claim to be a member of her father's church. She, instead, has entered the Catholic Church. She describes herself as such, and usually attends their services. (This does not, however, prevent her from participating in the ritual of her father's church when she wishes.)

On the other hand, in spite of the very real persuasiveness of education, its force is sometimes resisted:-

> Case 4. Nana Nyimpa. Nana Nyimpa is one of the Upper Saltpond Stool-Holders. He is a young man for his position - still in his thirties - and quite recently elected (see Chap. 9, Case 38, p.302).
>
> Nana Nyimpa's father was Methodist, and he was himself, as a child, brought up in the Methodist Church. Subsequently, though, he attended the government secondary school at Cape Coast, where most of the staff happened to be Anglican. During that time, he had lodgings with the headmaster of the school, who was also Anglican, and it became a matter of convenience for himself to join the Anglican Church. His new loyalty was only reinforced when, on leaving school, he moved on to an Anglican teacher training college.
>
> Later, though, when he was out in employment, he began to think that he should "return to the faith of his fathers", and he started to attend the Methodist Church in the town where he was teaching. At the present time, Nana Nyimpa returns frequently to Saltpond in order to fulfil the responsibilities of his office, and he attends the Upper Town Methodist Church on most occasions of particular religious or social importance.

The case of Mrs. Harper, which is to be dealt with next, illustrates a second very common reason for a change of religious attachment. This is one which frequently motivates people joining the African - and sometimes also the Pentecostal - churches. It is the desire for "spiritual" benefits:-

> Case 5. Mrs. Harper. Although Mrs. Harper claims that she "really belongs" to another quite different

church, she was, in 1973, attending regularly at the M.D.C.C. Mrs. Harper, who is not a native of Saltpond, was brought up as a Methodist, but changed upon marriage to join the Anglican Church to which her husband belonged. She is employed as a teacher at the Catholic Primary School, and is meanwhile resident in the town.

Mrs. Harper reported that she had first approached the M.D.C.C. a month or two before the initial interview, following a sharp attack of malaria. She had been cured of the fever itself in hospital, but, even after her discharge, she had been unable to return to work because she felt too weak. Realising, she said, that she was in need of some "spiritual healing", she came to the M.D.C.C., upon which she almost immediately regained her usual health, "just by prayers". She intended, she said, to return to the Anglican Church in due course. Nevertheless, she was still attending at the M.D.C.C. when the field period closed, some months later.

The examples given so far may have suggested that changes in church allegiances are generally motivated by positive attractions. However, the following case shows that this is not always true:-

Case 6. Mr. Opoku. Mr. Opoku is the son of a former Upper Saltpond Stool-Holder. He is himself a member of a major matrilineage which is based in Upper Saltpond, though its own Stool is located elsewhere (c.f. Chap.3, p.82). Thirty-five years of age, he has a secondary education to sixth form level, and has worked mainly in clerical positions with shipping companies. At the time of this research, however, he was unemployed, and was spending most of his time in Saltpond.

Mr. Opoku's father, and indeed his mother too, belonged to the Church of Pentecost, a denomination which he described as "ascetic", because of its proscriptions upon the drinking of alcohol and upon extra-marital affairs. He was brought up in this church himself, but, as he grew into adulthood, he decided in favour of a way of life by which his pleasures might be less restricted. Therefore, he claims, he joined the Methodist Church. His attendance, however, is so sparse that he should, perhaps, be regarded as no more than a "nominal" member.

Taken together, these several cases show that the individual is governed, in his choice of a particular church, not only by the rules laid down "by custom", but also by a variety of personal motives.

There are certain comments which need to be made before closing this subject. Firstly - and contrary to the balance of the examples above - , it must be emphasised that the "customary" principles are in fact followed

in what are probably the majority of cases. This is especially true so far as "professed" or "nominal" church membership is concerned. The effect of this has been that it is now normal for matrilineal groups of even the most segmented order to be intersected by a diversity of church loyalties.

It is also interesting to note that the "customary" principles regulating church membership parallel the rules which apparently once governed the worship of the "father's deity" in the "traditional" Fante system (c.f. Chap.3, p.92). In this system, as reconstructed in the early 1950s by J.B. Christensen[1], allegiance to each of a number of such deities was inherited along the paternal line by both male and female children. Wives, however, were expected to adopt their husbands' ritual observances for as long as their marriages lasted and their fertility remained. The practice of ritual addressed to the "father's deity" appeared to have lapsed in Saltpond by 1973, as indeed Christensen himself reported was largely the case among the Fante in the 1950s[2]. It seems clear, therefore, that certain of the latent functions of these diverse "traditional" cults have now been assumed by the multiplicity of Christain churches.

There is no further need to dwell upon the countless personal motives which cause individuals to abandon the "customary" rules. The pages which follow will attempt to show that, underlying these, there are more basic factors determining such deliberate changes of church attachment.

The discussion starts with churches of the "Establishment" type, first indicating the nature of their formal rituals, and then looking at their typical membership.

3. Establishment Churches (a) Services. The rituals of the Establishment churches can be regarded as conventional, in the sense that they are based on the standard liturgies approved by their respective confessions at international level. The main services are performed on Sundays and at important Christian festivals, and are essentially similar to those of the

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[1] Christensen 1954a:81-83
[2] ibid:96.

same church in other parts of the world. There are usually, though, certain small modifications, to allow for variation in local culture. This will be illustrated by the following example, which is drawn from one of the two largest churches in Saltpond, the Upper Town Methodist Church:-

> Services in an Establishment church. Methodists in Upper Saltpond take pride in the appearance of their church, a large and substantial building of conventional ecclesiastical design. Its twin towers (claimed by devotees to be "unique in Ghana") dominate much of the centre of the town from its hill-top site. The interior is furnished with heavy wooden pews, and illuminated by light streaming through pictorial stained glass windows.
>
> Sunday morning congregations can vary from 150 adults to as many as 500 on special occasions, but are usually of the order 200 to 250. Men and women tend to sit apart, though this principle is not observed invariably.
>
> The service begins with a procession of the choir and minister (ɔsɔfo) from the vestry. Meanwhile, the choir sing one of the hymns from the Methodist Hymn Book, using, as they are accustomed to do, the English version. The congregation joins in, some in English, others in Fante. The minister then reads the order for morning prayer in Fante; the congregation participates, where required for prayers and responses (which are sung), in the same tongue. The Lord's Prayer and the Psalms, however, are sung by the choir in English. Both a collection and an additional offering are taken, and there are further hymns, from the choir and congregation together. Bible readings and the sermon are usually in Fante, unless non-Akan-speaking visitors are expected, in which case a translation in whole or in part may be added. Sermons cover a variety of themes, ranging from advice on moral problems in contemporary Ghanaian life, to elucidation of the difference between Christian and "traditional" Akan cosmologies, or explanation of the Methodist view of Salvation in the next world through acceptance of Christ. Afterwards, the all-female Singing Band is given an opportunity to perform one of its vernacular lyric hymns. The service closes with a Benediction from the minister, and a final processional hymn.
>
> During services, or more particularly during sermons, there are occasional spontaneous outbursts of singing from women, taking the form of songs of praise or thanksgiving. These are usually accepted in good part by the minister if they do not continue for too long, but they are not widely encouraged.

The character of services in the other Establishment churches in Saltpond is, in a sense, similar to that described above. Like the Upper Town Methodists, many of these congregations have provided themselves

with what are considered suitably reverent surroundings for their worship. The Catholic Church, in particular, the centre-piece of the large Catholic beach-side compound, is equally imposing as the Methodists'. Even the tiny Low Town Methodist congregation have a soundly constructed - if small - chapel, in their own settlement. The A.M.E. Zion Church, on the other hand, was in 1973 something of an exception, being then in progress of collecting funds for an improved building. Presbyterian services were held in a classroom at the Pupil-Teacher Centre.

Low Town Methodists observe the same order of service as their fellows in Upper Town, but hold it entirely in Fante. The A.M.E. Zion and Anglican Churches use essentially the same service of morning prayer, though the Anglo-Catholic leaning of the latter body gives their ritual a rather different appearance. Both churches use more English than even the Upper Town Methodists, often adopting Fante only for Bible readings, sermons, and announcements. The Presbyterian congregation bases its services upon the Presbyterian Twi Liturgy and Hymnal, giving cross-references to the non-Akan Ewe and Ga versions. Catholic services, naturally, take the rather special form of the Mass, but since the reforms instigated by the Second Vatical Council of 1962-1965, this has been pronounced in Fante rather than in the former Latin.

All the Establishment groups, except the small Presbyterian congregation, have recruited church choirs. These are composed of both men and women, all of whom have attained a level of education imparting literacy in English. These same churches also have the Singing Bands, made up of non-literate women, who chant hymns in the vernacular. Of these congregations, all but the Low Town Methodists can provide an organ accompaniment to their singing, even if, in some cases, the instrument itself is approaching obsolescence.

This brief summary indicates the general character of Establishment church ritual in Saltpond. There has been some accommodation to local culture, most notably in the introduction of vernacular singing.

Nevertheless, any form of drumming or dancing is rigidly excluded. Some churches still make much use of the English language. In all cases, events follow a set order of service, and this allows for little spontaneity in worship.

It must now be asked what kind of person has been attracted to churches practising ritual of this particular character.

3. Establishment Churches (b) Congregations. The Establishment churches include the largest congregations in Saltpond. This is shown on Fig. 6.1:-

Fig. 6.1. Size of congregations in Saltpond churches.

Type	Church	Upper Saltpond	Lower Saltpond
		Average size of adult congregation[1]	
I.Establishment	1.Methodist Church	250	30
	2.Catholic Church	250	
	3.Anglican Church	50	
	4.A.M.E. Zion Church	50	
	5.Presbyterian Church	30	
	All Establishment churches:	630	30
II.Fundamentalist	1.Church of Pentecost	50	
	2.Assemblies of God	35	
	3.Jehovah's Witnesses	35	
	All Fundamentalist churches:	120	0
III.African	1.Musama Disco Christo Church	70	
	2.Twelve Apostles' Church		50
	3.African Faith Tabernacle Church		30
	4.Church of Christ Spiritual Movement		30
	5.Prophet Prah's Life and Salvation Church	30	
	6.Church of the Lord	15	
	All African churches:	115	110
	All Christian churches:	865	140

[1] see above, p.170, n.1.

The Establishment churches are also the longest established, and take in some which, historically, have been associated with one or other of the two separate Saltpond communities (see Chap.4, p.102).

The opposition between Upper Town and Low Town first came to be reflected in terms of Christian denomination in 1890. At that time,

the Methodist Church being then firmly established in Upper Town, the Catholic Church was introduced to provide, largely, for the needs of the Low Town population (Chap.5, pp.134-135, 137-138).

For some time, perhaps, an Upper Town Methodist/Low Town Catholic cleavage truly persisted; certainly, even today, there is a tendency among informants to describe the membership of these churches on this basis. Nowadays, however, this constitutes an over-simplification. Over the generations, inter-marriage between members of the two denominations, and the arrival of in-migrants whose church connections were already decided, have had the effect that the Catholic membership is today - as their priest admits - drawn rather more from Upper Town than from Low Town.

Nevertheless, it would perhaps be more true to say that the distinction has become blurred, rather than that it has entirely disappeared. The native Upper Town population has, nowadays, probably only a very slight preference for Methodism over Catholicism. On the other hand, more Lower Town people, even today, cross into Upper Town on Sundays to join in the Catholic services, than attend the Methodist chapel in their own settlement. Of these, Mrs. Baidoo (Case 14, p.184) is, or was, one.

The perceived distinction of Low Town Catholics from Upper Town Methodists is emphasised by the continuing church loyalties of some pre-eminent "traditional" leaders. The Chief of Low Town, for instance, remains, like his predecessors, an "active" Catholic. The current Chief of Upper Town, in 1973, was "nominally" a Methodist, and the Queen Mother was "actively" so. (These affiliations, however, in Upper Town at least, may be in part fortuitous.) More will be said on the subject of church affiliations of "traditional" leaders in due course (p.180).

The incidence of native Upper Town and Low Town people among the Methodist and Catholic congregations provides them with one of their more important characteristics, and one which cannot be ignored. However, for the sake of the present analysis, it is probably more useful to look at the

characteristics of Establishment-type congregations in general.

The men in these organisations, if they are natives of the town, are predominantly successful independent entrepreneurs. Alternatively, they are the retired, those who in earlier life have pursued respectable careers elsewhere. Thus, either way, they belong to the relatively higher of the "social classes" which were shown to be emerging in Chapter 2 (pp.63-64). In practice, the two categories of native-born male members often overlap, but, whether or no, there is a marked tendency for the men in both to be somewhat elderly. Mr. Mansen offers a good example:-

> Case 7. Mr. Mansen. Mr. Mansen, aged 63, a prominent Methodist, attends regularly at the Upper Saltpond Wesleyan Church, and is an influential member of its Laymen's Association. Although belonging to one of the Upper Town matrilineages, he spent most of his childhood with his father in the distant town of Sekondi, and did not come to live in Saltpond until he was 22. He was educated to Standard VI level. Part of his working life was spent in the army, with which he saw war service as a senior N.C.O. in the Far East. He returned with a war record in which he takes great pride. Since his demobilisation, he has worked as an independent "business-man" with a variety of interests.
>
> Nearly 20 years ago, Mr Mansen contracted a church marriage with a young Upper Town woman who, at this, joined his own church (see Case 12, p.183). Their marriage has been childless, but Mr. Mansen has children of other marriages who have been brought up as Methodists.
>
> Mr. Mansen is generally recognised through the town as a man of means and influence, and, though not actually a Stool-Holder, holds one of the "traditional" town offices (see Chap.8, Case 7/29, p.~~180~~/260).

Incidentally, the fact that most holders of "traditional" offices - asafo officers, Stool-Holders like Nana Nyimpa (Case 4, p.173), and Chiefs - belong to churches of this type, should occasion no surprise. As mentioned earlier (Chap.3, pp.79-80; Chap.4, pp.105,116), appointments to "traditional" offices are now invariably made from the relatively more privileged "social classes". Thus the appointees are, almost always, Establishment church members.

Most younger Saltpond-born men of similar "class" status, those as yet in mid-career, are, like Nana Nyimpa, away from town in professional employment elsewhere. Most of these have attained rather higher levels of

education than their seniors, though probably, in most cases, for no other reason than the difference in generation. Most come to church in their home-town even less than Nana Nyimpa - perhaps only for Christmas, Easter, and the occasional funeral. Most, therefore, are excluded from the population taken as the basis for this study. There were, however (in 1973), two notable exceptions to the more usual case of the educated émigré. These were the headmasters of the Catholic and Methodist Middle Schools, both of whom belonged to Upper Saltpond matrilineages, and were active members of their respective denominations. (The Methodist Headmaster was himself elderly, and retired at the end of the year.)

These two men were, in terms of occupation, more alike to the second, and younger, element active within Establishment churches. This is made up of other professional or semi-professional employees in the town - civil servants (senior and, sometimes, junior), hospital workers, teachers, and the like - , most of whom are non-native immigrants. The following are typical:-

> Case 8. Mr. Nyaarko. Mr. Nyaarko, aged about 40, comes from another Fante town in the Central Region. Educated to near-graduate level, he now has work as a pharmacist in Saltpond. Here, he has rented accommodation. His wife, who has a middle-school education, is self-employed as a trader in cloth, keeping a stall at the twice-weekly market at Mankesim. She also takes orders as a seamstress.
>
> Mr. Nyaarko was brought up as a Catholic, as was his wife also. Both are now active and leading members of the Catholic Church in Upper Saltpond.

> Case 9. Mr. Asare. Mr. Asare's home-town lies within the Akwapim area of the Eastern Region. A graduate, he now works as a civil servant for the Ministry of Education Curricula and Courses establishment in Saltpond. He is about 40 years old.
>
> Mr. Asare was brought up in the Presbyterian Church, numerically the strongest of the denominations in his own part of Ghana. Like his wife, he remains an active member of the church. Indeed, it is he who, under the title of caretaker-catechist, manages the affairs of the local Presbyterian congregation, too small as it is to warrant a minister of its own.

Younger men of lesser "class" status, who are natives of Saltpond and still resident in the town, are heavily outweighed in the Establishment

churches by men such as these. Moreover, the large number of Saltpond males whose membership of Establishment denominations has lapsed, or has only ever been merely professed, includes many of the less privileged category. Mr. Amponsah is a case in point:-

> Case 10: Mr. Amponsah. Mr. Amponsah, a man in his forties, has work as a labourer. In his childhood, he was sent by his father (who seems himself to have had no definite church attachment) for a few years of elementary education at the Catholic School in Upper Town. At that time, he became a member of the Upper Town Catholic Church.
>
> However, as he explains, he lost interest in the church as he grew older. The main reason which he gives for this, is the dissatisfaction he felt at the change from the Latin version of the Mass to the Fante. He also accuses the priests of raising collections entirely for their own gain.
>
> Nowadays, he does not regularly attend at any church, but he approaches one of the African sects, the Twelve Apostles' Church, whenever he feels in particular need of "spiritual" benefits.

The preceding paragraphs have dealt with the men who are representative of those active in the Establishment churches, and have found them to be drawn, in the main, from the relatively more privileged "social classes". The women in these churches are, at first sight, perhaps, more difficult to categorise on these grounds than are the men.

Many of these women are engaged in usual female occupations, such as in food-preparation or in small-scale trade, or else are not working at all; in this, they differ little from women outside these churches. Nor, on the whole, do they possess any great advantage in terms of education. Unlike the men (almost all of whom, in the Establishment churches, have had sufficient schooling to be able to understand and read English), only a minority of women above quite young middle-age have had even the few years of schooling needed to impart literacy in Fante, let along literacy in English. As Chapter 2 showed (pp.45-46), the number of Saltpond women of this generation, in the Establishment churches or outside, who have completed their education to Standard VI level is small indeed. Virtually all the younger women in these churches have been educated to middle-school level, but, here again, they are little different from the majority of outsiders of similar age.

The difference between the generations in terms of education reflects the fact that, until quite recently, education has not been as readily available, or considered as necessary, for girls as it has for boys.

This was formerly the case, even, on the whole, among privileged circles in the local community, and was associated with the expectation that women would not involve themselves in the developing "modern" occupational structures. The Establishment churches certainly now include among their members a lesser proportion of women employed in the modern sector of the economy, largely teachers, nurses, and civil servants. However, the majority, like their male counterparts, are temporarily-resident immigrants. Of these, Mrs. Agbenu has achieved an exceptionally senior position:-

> Case 11. Mrs. Agbenu. Mrs. Agbenu, who is aged about 40, and who is an Ewe from the Volta Region, is one of the leading female members of the Catholic Church.
>
> Very unusually among women in Saltpond, she has been educated to graduate level, and is now employed as a senior civil servant in the government education office in the town.
>
> She has recently become re-married, this time to a teacher at one of the Saltpond schools, who is also an immigrant to the town, and is likewise a Catholic. The children of her previous marriage, in her own care, are being brought up in the same faith.

Attitudes among the local people, too, are now changing, but the effect of this has not yet worked its way through the native female population up to all ages. Thus, education and occupation do not, at present, provide appropriate indices for a ranking of women, whether in the Establishment churches or elsewhere.

On the other hand, it is a striking fact that most Saltpond-born women in the Establishment churches are the wives and daughters of male church members. Mrs. Mansen (Case 12) is typical of the older generations; Mrs. Acquaah and Mrs. Baidoo (Cases 13 and 14) representative of the younger ones:-

> Case 12. Mrs. Mansen. Mrs. Mansen is now in her mid-forties. Nearly 20 years ago, she became the "wedded" wife, by church marriage, of a man highly influential both in the community of Upper Saltpond, and among his own congregation in the Upper Town Methodist Church (see Case 7 above, p.180). She is in the somewhat

fortunate position of having regular employment with one of the government establishments in town, as the supervisor of their canteen.

Mrs. Mansen comes from one of the Upper Saltpond matrilineages, and was brought up in the town. Her father (now dead), also a native of Upper Town, was apparently a man of at least some means. Nevertheless, he did not provide her with any education, reserving the opportunity for her brothers, and only in later years extending it to certain of her younger sisters. All the same, he brought her up in his own Catholic faith, although she put this aside at her marriage, in order to join her husband's Methodist Church.

Since then, she has attended fairly regularly at her new church (though not as invariably as her husband), and she has also become a member of one of its women's groups. In spite of the fact that she lives in the same house as her husband, they rarely go to church in company. Never do they sit together in church.

Case 13. Mrs. Jessica Acquaah. Mrs. Jessica Acquaah, a married woman in her late twenties, is a member of a prominent Upper Town matrilineage, being, in fact, a sister's daughter of the aged Stool-Holder himself. She is the youngest of four sisters, most of whom have made highly prestigious marriages.

Her maternal grandfather, the Stool-Holder's father, was, it seems, one of the notable Methodist catechist-teachers of the late 19th century. He, of course, was not a lineage member, but from his marriage sprang a minor matrilineage which, perhaps choosing its marriage partners judiciously, has been able to claim a Methodist attachment into the second and third generations.

Mrs. Acquaah's own father, in his lifetime a successful and wealthy trader, as well as a Chief in another town, was accordingly also Methodist.

Mrs. Acquaah was educated at teacher-training college, and is now, like her own husband, employed as a primary school teacher. She and her husband attend regularly at the Upper Town Methodist Church.

Case 14. Mrs. Susannah Baidoo. Mrs. Baidoo is in her early twenties, and, at the beginning of the field period, was recently separated from her husband. The latter was a young immigrant, brought to the town by his work. They have a young child.

Both Mrs. Baidoo's parents belong to matrilineages in Lower Saltpond, where her father keeps a small store. Her father is a Catholic, and brought her up in the same faith. As a child, she used to walk over to Upper Town to attend the Catholic Schools, Primary and Middle. She is now in the enviable position of having employment in one of the government offices in the town, where she works as a telephonist.

After the break-up of her marriage, she returned to live with her parents in Low Town. Thus, again, she has to take the walk into Upper Town on the occasions when she goes to church. These are somewhat irregular, but more than

sufficient for her to be classified as an "active" member.

(Immediately before the close of the field period, she was, in fact, reconciled to her husband, and moved back into his rented accommodation in Upper Town.)

To sum up, women such as these enjoy a prestige commensurate with that of their husbands and fathers. This is particularly beneficial to those of the older generation; they, too, can thus be regarded as members of the more privileged "social class", if not actually in their own right, then through the mechanisms of marriage and birth.

The suggested association of the Establishment churches with women of relatively high "class" status is not intended to imply that some of these women are not, in fact, living in difficult financial circumstances. Indeed, it appears that, whereas a man "born" into a particular church who does not achieve at least a moderately secure financial standing will tend to absent himself, a woman in the same position will not necessarily feel a similar restraint. Often, however, these more unfortunate women are elderly, and an impoverished old lady may well prove to be the faithful widow of a long-dead, but well-respected, male communicant:-

Case 15. Madam Esi. Madam Esi is now in her seventies, bent with age. She lives in a lineage house in Upper Saltpond, with some of the adult children of her sister (long deceased), with her own two middle-aged daughters, and her daughters' children (some also adult women).

Her father was Methodist, as also was her husband, who many years ago made her a widow. She is not a wealthy woman; she has no sons to support her, and even her daughters' circumstances are unexceptional (one is herself a widow). She is, however, fortunate, in that she holds the rights to a small farm plot outside town, and, although the journey is difficult for her, she cultivates this with the help of children of the household. The returns on this contribute to her needs.

She has remained an active member of the Methodist Church, which she manages to attend quite often. She is, indeed, even more strict in her belief than the younger members of the household (all Christian, of one denomination or another), for, unlike many of them, she refuses to entertain any idea of the "traditional" gods and spirits.

Thus, to conclude, even the presence of a certain number of less wealthy women among the female members of the Establishment churches does not negate their essential "class" bias.

While on the subject of women as opposed to men, it is appropriate to discuss the relative numbers of each sex in Establishment churches. In all such organisations in Saltpond, the menfolk of the congregation are outnumbered by the women (see Fig. 6.2, p.201). This fact is a source of concern to some Establishment ministers. On the other hand, since the proportion of women in many of the Establishment-type congregations lies in the approximate range of 55-60%, and since the Saltpond population of 15 years and over is itself 57.5% female (see Fig. 2.3, p.41), much of the apparent discrepancy can be accounted for on these grounds alone.

Some discrepancy remains, however, particularly in certain cases, such as those of the Methodist and Anglican Churches. Nevertheless, there are firm reasons for regarding these organisations as the province of men, rather than of women. As has been implied above, it may almost be said that the female members of these churches are present because they have been taken by men, rather than through any real initiative of their own. Moreover, men monopolise the effective positions of leadership within these churches. Women, it is true, have associations of their own within the organisations, and some of their female leaders win an influence of a sort in church counsels. On the other hand, many women's groups actually have men in their pre-eminent positions. Men predominate among the elders of the church, and men hold the important lay offices, such as that of church warden. Churches of this type have an all-male ministry. The situation is quite different in churches of other types, where, as Fig. 6.2 shows, the preponderance of women is vastly greater than in the Establishment churches. The subject of the relative over-representation of women in Christian churches will be taken up again in connection with these other organisations.

Establishment churches have been shown to attract members of the more privileged "social class", be they men or women, native or immigrant. Before closing the subject, however, the question of the patronage of these

organisations by immigrants deserves further mention.

All Establishment churches in Upper Saltpond have immigrants among their congregations, but not all of them include native-born Saltpond people. This is because Upper Town people, who are active in Establishment churches, overwhelmingly support either the Catholic or the Methodist Churches. Others are to be found in the A.M.E. Zion Church. (Any Low Towners in the Upper Town Establishment churches are invariably Catholic.) The presence of a significant native-born section within the congregations gives these churches a rather different character from that of the remaining Establishment organisations. Although certain immigrants number among their more prominent laity, control of church affairs lies largely with local people. On the other hand, the Anglican Church, even today, draws the greater part of its backing from Fante originating from towns other than Saltpond, and these are the people who provide its effective lay leadership. More strikingly still, the Presbyterian congregation, composed almost entirely of non-Fante Akan from other regions - plus a small number of Ga and Ewe - is wholly led by such (c.f. Case 9, p.181).

Churches with these differing characteristics clearly fulfil different latent functions. The wholly immigrant congregations, for instance, provide their members with what is, in effect, a local community of their own (though it is one which is relatively uniform in the "class" status of its members). The mixed congregations articulate a group whose common interests are based on "class" to the exclusion of "locality".

The next task must be to consider what differences are shown by the members of churches of other types, and what is the nature of the ritual which attracts them.

4. Fundamentalist Churches (a) Services. As regards the Fundamentalist churches, it is far less satisfactory to use the ritual of any single case as representative of all. This is because those among them which are Pentecostal in inclination accord to their services, by their very nature, a character special to themselves. Therefore, for the group of churches

included under this heading, two examples will be given. The first is of a Pentecostal-type service:-

> Services in a Pentecostal church. In 1973, the Church of Pentecost in Upper Saltpond (popularly known as the "Apostolic Church") was on the way to completing a new, larger, and more centrally situated building. For the time being, assemblies were still being held in the old premises, which, relative to the more elaborate of the Establishment churches, were furnished simply.
>
> The "Apostolic" services which are regarded as most important, and are therefore most highly attended, take place on Sundays. (There are other meetings, open either to the whole congregation, or to sub-groups of it, on weekday evenings.) Services begin at a settled time, but continue for as long as "moved by the Spirit". They are conceived as allowing for each member to express his individual inspiration.
>
> The Sunday morning congregation usually numbers some 50 or 60 adults, with 20 or so children. Men, women and children sit in separate groups. The service is conducted by the minister, or, in his absence, by one of the church elders (all of whom are male). It is deliberately flexible, in that it does not necessarily conform to a set pattern. Nevertheless, it generally follows much the same course.
>
> The first arrivals open the proceedings by joining together in some of the well-known Fante religious songs. A musical accompaniment is provided by a band of 5 to 10 female tambourine-players, and a male bass-player who plucks out the rhythm upon a single-stringed instrument. All others present help to reinforce the beat by clapping hands, and most are drawn to dance in time to the music, though usually they remain in their places all the while. This continues while late-comers gather, and may last for half an hour or more.
>
> Eventually, the minister directs that it is time for prayer, at which members of the congregation stand up, with hands raised above the head, each simultaneously praying aloud on whatever subject the Spirit has "moved" to him- or herself. After some time, this communal form of prayer is called to a halt, and then anyone who receives the inspiration so to do, has the chance to pray on his own in the hearing of the rest of the congregation. Often, the subject is a simple expression of praise, or of thanks to God. At this point, once all inspiration has revealed itself, there is probably a reading from the Bible in Fante, followed by a call for personal testimonies. Members of the congregation use this opening in various ways, some perhaps to witness to God's message with quotations from the Bible, others to praise Him in song. Yet more tell of events in their lives in which they feel they have seen the working of God's power, and others, again, who have suffered from sickness or from specific worries, relate their personal difficulties and ask for the prayers of the congregation. When all are satisfied, the minister probably delivers his sermon, often the recitation of a Biblical story, with an elucidation of its moral significance. Shortly afterwards, the collection will be taken, each group leaving their seats in turn to form a procession past the collecting-box. Meanwhile, the rest of

> the congregation are singing. The minister then makes any necessary announcements, and finally recites a few short closing prayers, including the Lord's Prayer and a Blessing.
>
> Sometimes during the proceedings, special action may be taken to bring healing. Those present who are in poor health are called to the front of the church, to receive the prayers of minister and congregation.
>
> The whole programme lasts anything up to 3 or 4 hours, being constantly interspersed with song and prayer introduced solely on the initiative of individual participants. Song, dance and prayer are all believed to manifest the working of the Holy Spirit, and some of the prayer is of a most fervent character. Dancing, however, is restrained, and no cases were encountered of violent spirit possession.

Assemblies of God services, while far from identical to those of the Church of Pentecost, have not been judged here to be sufficiently different as to warrant separate treatment in detail. The general atmosphere, at least, is rather similar, for there is a fair deal of vernacular hymn-singing, initiated from the congregation as well as from the minister, and this is accompanied with tambourines and hand-clapping. On the other hand, there is no dancing. Moreover, a considerable amount of English is used during the services (probably because of the presence in the town of American missionaries, who sometimes officiate in church), translations into Fante being given, sentence by sentence, through an interpreter. It is characteristic of this church that it provides special prayers for healing, on a regular basis, the sick being called out of their seats to receive them. Even more characteristic, perhaps, is the never-omitted invitation, to anyone wishing to accept Christ and be "saved", to come to the front of the church. From there, he (or she) may receive the prayers, of minister and congregation, that he be "born again". Sermons frequently emphasise the need to forego sin, before Salvation can be won.

Meetings of the Jehovah's Witnesses have a quite different character, and are described below:-

> Meetings of the Jehovah's Witnesses. The Saltpond band of Jehovah's Witnesses have no resident minister. Their affairs are managed by one of their literate members, who himself conducts the services, except on the rare occasion of a visit by the Superintendent from his base in the town of Swedru, 50 or so miles away. The Witnesses do not have elaborate premises, but nevertheless occupy rooms of a respectable size. Congregations are in the order of some 35 adults.
>
> Services follow lines laid down in the official literature of the sect, drawn up overseas. The meeting begins with perhaps two hymns, in English, taken from the Jehovah's Witnesses' own hymnal. There is no musical accompaniment, and no dancing. This is followed by a short prayer read by the officiant, and then by a session of preaching lasting anything up to three-quarters of an hour. The themes for these sermons are generally taken from articles in the "Watchtower", the Witnesses' periodical magazine, whose distribution is - in various languages - worldwide. The preacher draws heavily upon the written text, reading it in full, and relying on it for all of the many Biblical illustrations deemed necessary; his own contribution lies in breaking down the whole into manageable parts, which he reads word for word to his audience, and then elaborates and explains. Sometimes a text in English, rather than Twi, is used, in which case it is the preacher's task to translate this into the vernacular. When the preaching is at an end, the session closes with any necessary announcements.
>
> It is followed by a second hour of so-called "group discussion", in which leading members of the congregation assist others in their understanding of their "Watchtower" periodicals.

There is a very real difference, therefore, between meetings of the Jehovah's Witnesses, and those of the Pentecostal churches which have been included with them in the same category. The Witnesses' meetings conform to a pre-determined order, and are of a restrained character, in that they involve no search after ecstasy in prayer, or towards personal experience with members of the Christian Trinity. Thus, to sum up, their services do not offer the same scope for individual spontaneity in worship as those of the Pentecostals.

None the less, the congregations in all these churches show certain broad similarities in their social characteristics. These characteristics are described below.

4. Fundamentalist Churches (b) Congregations. Fundamentalist churches are rather smaller than Establishment churches, or at least than the more popular of them. The Church of Pentecost, with an average adult congregation of 50 adults, attracts the greatest support; the others secure rather less, in terms of adult attendance. Assemblies of God services, however, often attract large numbers of unaccompanied children.

The Fundamentalist churches differ, again, from the Establishment churches, in that they do not have so firm a base in the privileged sections of the Saltpond population. This is not to say that there are no wealthy or well-educated members active within these denominations, but they are fewer in terms of total numbers, and, moreover, form only a small proportion of their respective congregations. Men of this description, usually either independent entrepreneurs or employees with responsible positions in commerce or the civil service, are almost invariably appointed church elders. Often, however, the greater part of even the lay leadership have a rather lower "class" status than the majority of Establishment church members. Mr. Denkyi is typical:-

> Case 16. Mr. Denkyi. Mr. Denkyi is an elderly man, whose home-town is Obo Kwahu, in the Eastern Region. In his childhood, he received a few years of elementary education. Subsequently, he has spent his life as an independent trader, specialising in the sale of medicines, and he now keeps a small chemist's store on the main street of Upper Saltpond.
>
> He does not claim to any firm church attachment in his youth, but reports that he was converted to the Jehovah's Witnesses' movement while working in Agona Swedru during the early 1940s. He moved to Saltpond shortly after the Second War, and was largely instrumental in building up the group of Witnesses in the town.

Ordinary male members are usually drawn from the ranks of artisans and labourers, and may have little or no education:-

> Case 17. Mr. Ofori. Mr. Ofori, a native of Upper Saltpond aged about 40, is a member of the Church of Pentecost, with no special position. He has no education, and is therefore illiterate. Until recently, he was employed as a labourer at the geological station in the town, but he had (in 1973) just been dismissed under suspicion of an act of dishonesty, which he denies. He is now in danger of permanent unemployment. He hopes that his church

> membership will afford him "spiritual" advantages, enabling him to see his case successfully through the court. (The case had not yet been heard when the field period ended.)

In most churches of this type, however, active male members, other than church elders, are notably few in numbers. The one exception to this is the Church of Jehovah's Witnesses, in which ordinary male members - typically junior civil servants - are, on the whole literate, like their leaders.

In the other Fundamentalist churches, congregations are rather more predominantly female than even in Establishment churches (see Fig. 6.2, p.201). These women, occupationally and educationally similar to those in churches of this other type, are mainly housewives and small-scale traders. If much over the age of 30, they have probably had very little education. The younger women, with middle-school education, have mostly not succeeded in finding paid employment. They, too, are in most cases either currently married, or at least caring for young children. Mrs. Nsame is one:-

> Case 18. Mrs. Christianah Nsame. Mrs. Nsame, aged 30, is at present living in a lineage house in Upper Town, with her mother's brother, several of her mother's sisters, and other matrikin. However, she was brought up and educated, not in Saltpond, but inland in Asante, where her mother worked as a bread-maker, and indeed still does. Her parents are divorced, and her father, also a Saltpond man, now works for one of the public corporations in Accra.
>
> Her father is a Methodist, and her mother took the same faith during their marriage, but has since become an active member of the Assemblies of God. Mrs. Nsame, herself, was brought up as a Methodist. She has, until quite recently, been married to a young man in Saltpond, also a Methodist, the marriage having taken the "traditional" form, with an additional blessing in the Methodist Church. Subsequently, however, the contract was dissolved with the cooperation of the Methodist minister.
>
> Mrs. Nsame is continuing in persistent efforts to find employment, but is in the meantime receiving some financial support from her father.
>
> She has abandoned her former church allegiance, and instead has joined the Assemblies of God, like her mother. This she attends fairly regularly, though not invariably.

As with the Establishment denominations, some of the Fundamentalist groups appeal differently to native and to immigrant sections of the population. The Church of Pentecost, for instance, draws much of its

support from natives of the town, and has in the past received the patronage of at least one of the "traditional" leaders, a wealthy Stool-Holder who, for many years, laid claim to be the Upper Town Chief (see Chap. 4, pp.105-106). The Assemblies of God Church is beginning to find a backing among the native population of Upper Town, but has not, as yet, attracted the interest of any of the more influential, or higher "class", local people. The Church of Jehovah's Witnesses is predominantly an immigrants' church, whose members derive almost wholly from the non-Fante (though Akan) Eastern Region. It is interesting to note that this body - like the (Establishment) Presbyterian Church which, in this respect, has the same character - has a congregation which nearly approaches equality in terms of the proportion of women to men.

5. African Churches (a) Services. The concern with healing, which - receiving little emphasis in the Establishment churches - numbers among the varied interests of the Fundamentalists, is expanded by the African churches into their virtual raison d'etre. In most of the local Saltpond branches of these organisations, there may be found people who have come to live at the church seeking the cure for a particular complaint. All the sects perform special healing services, which are attended by regular members as a precautionary measure, and sometimes also by outsiders who have specific problems. The churches of this type have probably felt the least constrained, of any in the town, by the conventions governing worship in the Establishment churches.

It is probably best to avoid hasty generalisations in describing the ritual of these churches. Its distinctive features will be apparent from the examples which follow. The first is taken from the M.D.C.C.:-

> Services at the Musama Disco Christo Church. The Musama Disco Christo Church - which is located in Kuranchikrom, an outer quarter of Upper Saltpond - holds regular services on Sunday mornings, and on certain weekday evenings. There is also a popular healing service, every Friday. Attendances are highest, however, for the Sunday evening service of so-called "spiritual invocation", and it will be this order of ritual that is described here.

On many occasions, congregations meet in a chapel-room within the pastor's compound, but, at this time, the service is always held in the group's larger and separate church building. The construction of this, in corrugated iron, is relatively simple, but perfectly adequate. Furnishings are on the same scale. A measure of dignity is provided by an 8 ft. high wooden cross, painted white, which, standing at the door of the church, can be seen from inside. It is mirrored by another similar cross, only slightly smaller, placed in front of the altar. Upon the altar-table rests a large, three-pronged candle-stick.

The congregation usually numbers about 70 adults, and nearly as many children. Men, women, and children sit separately, and the church elders, all male, form a group of their own behind the altar. Beside them sits the three-man band of drummers. The pastor (asɔfo), who is in this case a woman, wears a long white dress. So, too, do the members of the special Prayer Group, numbering, for the time being, 2 adult women and 9 little girls. Other members of the congregation have the option of wearing white, but only a few do so entirely.

The session opens with a series of religious songs, to the accompaniment of the drums. The whole congregation joins in the singing, many dancing in their places, and all enlivening the rhythm by clapping their hands. The songs are interspersed with prayers from the pastor.

During this time, the offering is collected. For this purpose, those in each section of the congregation, in turn, leave their places to make a procession to the altar.

The singing lasts for about half an hour, after which the pastor initiates a special prayer for the Holy Spirit to come down among the congregation. This is followed by another period of singing, but now of a more strikingly fervent and exciting character. After perhaps 15 minutes of this, the pastor calls the congregation to come forward to "receive the Spirit", and, while singing and drumming continue, they file past her before the altar, each member kneeling to be annointed on the head with a few drops of lavender water, a perfume believed to be attractive to the "angels". Certain people, at this point, receive special attention, perhaps having their faces washed, or receiving a little of the mixture to drink. The whole procedure can last anything up to an hour.

When each person present has been treated, the pastor calls the singing to a halt, and delivers a short sermon. This tends to take the theme that God is only willing to heal sicknesses in those who allow themselves to "receive the Spirit", by maintaining faith and hope. The point of the preaching is reinforced with copious illustrations of cases where patients, having consulted the pastor about their complaints, succeeded in doing this, and were then miraculously cured. Such tales inspire expressions of approval and praise from the congregation, and, at times, spontaneous outbursts of song.

Finally, when her sermon is over, the pastor usually ends the service with a few prayers, and a Blessing. Sometimes, before doing this, however, she annoints each member of the congregation for a second time, now with olive oil.

This account shows the close attention which is habitually paid by the M.D.C.C. to individuals, as well as the allowance which is made in the church for personal expression.

Both these aspects, in fact, receive even greater emphasis at other times. This is particularly the case at the Friday services, held in the chapel-room of the pastor's new, concrete-built house. On this occasion, special healing techniques are practised on behalf of individuals, and "testimonies" of personal experience - rarely delivered on Sunday evenings - are given.

The M.D.C.C. adopts yet other orders of service, for various occasions. (One - which was not observed by the writer - is reputedly modelled upon the Catholic Mass.) As a generalisation, it is probably fair to say that the ritual of this organisation is more highly formalised than that of many of the African churches. This is particularly evident at the level of its national headquarters, where, however, the matter cannot be followed in the present study.

In the M.D.C.C., although it engages in activities which are specifically intended to invoke the Holy Spirit, cases of violent spirit-possession do not normally occur. This, at least, was the case in the local Saltpond branch, where the church was most closely studied; here, even mild physical manifestations of spirit-possession were relatively infrequent. Dancing, moreover, usually took a very restrained form. In this respect, therefore, the M.D.C.C. is rather different from certain other churches included with it in the same category.

To illustrate this fact, there will be an account of services in the Twelve Apostles' Church, which shows, perhaps, the most points of contrast[1]. The Twelve Apostles' Church is in Low Town, but its inclusion here is not unjustified, for it is, at times, patronised by Upper Town people, if only on an occasional basis.

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[1] A more comprehensive treatment of rituals in the Twelve Apostles' Church is available in Breidenbach 1975:92-110; 1976:137-144.

Services at the Twelve Apostles' Church. The Twelve Apostles' Church is the largest of all the Christian groups based in the fishing-village of Lower Saltpond (see Fig. 6.1, p.178). It secures its largest attendance, not for its regular Sunday morning service, nor for its various evening sessions, but on Fridays.

All services take place in the church's own compound, which, built around the "traditional" pattern of the square, consists of chapel-rooms, offices, and accommodation for patients in residence. The compound is especially remarkable, in comparison with those of the other African churches, for the large and elaborate concrete sculpture which stands at the centre of its open courtyard. This takes the form of a large cross, more than 6 ft. high, standing between two human-sized figures of angels in attitudes of supplication; in front of the cross stands a third angel, an angel militant, with sword raised. These figures, all vividly painted, are positioned upon a platform, with steps reaching up to it on all four sides. The imposing appearance of this set-piece evidences, together with the generally sound construction of the compound itself, to the relative prosperity of this church.

Services at the Twelve Apostles' Church follow a less predictable order than those of any other in the town. Indeed, the sequence of events is frequently modified by inspiration "received" by the Prophet (ɔsɔfo), who has charge of the local establishment, or by the two Prophetesses. Nevertheless, these services generally include a number of standard elements.

The Friday mid-day proceedings, which are usually attended by some 50 to 60 adults, take the explicit form of a healing service. This is held in the central chapel-room, and is conducted by the Prophet, with the assistance of the Prophetesses. All three dress wholly in red. Many of the congregation also wear red, if only (among the women) in the form of a red head-tie. This practice is usually observed most strictly by the men and women who make up the gourd-rattle band, which complements the singing. These number some 16 or so, in approximately equal proportions of each sex. One male member of the band beats a tin drum.

The band strikes up to open the programme, and accompanies it, virtually, from start to finish. The singing is led, in a "traditional" style, by the Prophet himself, who chants the themes, and encourages chorus-responses from the congregation. He, too, plays a gourd-rattle, as also do the Prophetesses. The music is conceived as assisting in the accomplishment of the initial aim of the service, which is to solicit the presence of the Holy Spirit within the congregation.

Individual members, who hope to achieve this more personally, have the option of undergoing definite procedures for the induction of possession, and usually at least half a dozen people take advantage of this. More often than not, they are women. These make their way, almost immediately, out into the open court-yard, where one or other of the Prophetesses applies to each some special treatment. This usually consists in the placing of a copy of the Bible upon the supplicants' heads. Sometimes, alternatively, a large pan of "Holy Water" is used in the same manner.

The supplicants stand patiently in the full noon sun, balancing the Bibles on their heads all the while, until, if they are fortunate, the Holy Spirit "comes" to them. Some

experience this almost at once, and begin first to twitch, and then to dance. Others, however, wait for an hour or more, and not always with success. Meanwhile, even some of those who have remained inside the chapel-room have become "filled" with the Holy Spirit. The Spirit has long since "entered" the Prophet and Prophetesses, who are now "speaking in tongues", in an admixture of various European and African languages, other than their native Fante.

Still the music continues, and the manifestations of possession by the Spirit grow more and more exuberant. Dancing becomes more vigorous. Possessed supplicants now behave quite unpredictably, though rarely are their actions really violent or dangerous. One may rush before the Prophet to kiss his feet, or pass through the chapel-room greeting each member of the congregation. Many dance extrovertly round and round the compound, and some climb the steps to embrace the tall crucifix.

By the time some half an hour of this has passed, the Prophet leaves the congregation to take care of themselves in their singing, and he, too, still in a state of controlled possession, turns his attention to particular individuals. One, perhaps, he will lead out to the door of the chapel-room, where he will lay hands on her, and pray, in order to induce possession by the Holy Spirit. For some cases, he may bring out, from his own inner sanctuary, a 6 ft. long wooden cross of brilliant white. This he uses to heighten the impact of his prayers, perhaps touching with it the person who is to receive them. Other people are called into the sanctuary itself, to receive more private attentions.

After about 2 hours, the fervour of the possessions begins to subside. Anyone still waiting unsuccessfully outside to receive the Spirit is relieved, and the emphasis turns more specifically to healing. The two Prophetesses, still possessed, re-enter the chapel-room, and circulate around the congregation, laying hands on each member, and praying for each "in tongues". At times, they find it necessary to question their patients; the respondents often need another member of the congregation to interpret what is asked, since the Prophetesses' Fante, while in their possessed state, is only very halting. In some cases, lavender water is applied to the patients, and special attention is given to pregnant women and small babies. Anyone known to be seriously ill may be taken over to receive prayers from the Prophet himself.

This stage continues for perhaps another hour, when the Prophet brings the proceedings to their close by leading the whole congregation into the inner sanctuary. There, they kneel before the simple altar, which stands in one corner. On either side of the altar lean the long white cross, and a second, red staff of similar length, its head concealed in a binding of the same colour. Upon the altar rest two buckets of "Holy Water", used by the Prophet for diagnostic purposes.

The Prophet now pronounces a short Blessing, after which, members of the congregation rise, in turn, to take their offering - usually relatively small - up to the altar. The service itself is then at an end.

It is immediately followed, however, by a special healing session, conducted most usually by the Prophetesses, with the use of "Holy Water". Each Prophetess stands beneath the central crucifix, raising a large pan of water above her head, and remains there until she begins to twitch. This is the sign that the Holy Spirit has "come", and has afforded the water its

> peculiar power. It is then used to bathe all those desiring healing, or "spiritual protection", notably including the pregnant women. Each person strips to the waist for his (or, more often, her) own turn. Those who have been treated shortly begin to drift away, and gradually the afternoon's proceedings come to a halt.

These two examples have, in effect, illustrated the range of variation that occurs in the ritual of African churches in the town, from the relatively highly structured, to the almost wholly non-formalised. They suggest, possibly, an even starker contrast than actually exists. The M.D.C.C.'s own special healing service, held on Friday, for instance, shows rather closer continuities with the Twelve Apostles' ritual which was described here. Very similar attentions are devoted to pregnant women, babies, and the sick. However, neither in this, nor in most other African churches in Saltpond, do there normally appear such exuberant states of possession as are characteristic of the Twelve Apostles' Church.

The only exception to this is in Prophet Prah's Life and Salvation Church, located on the very fringe of town. This particular body is distinctive in several ways, its settlement in Saltpond being the national headquarters of an organisation covering much of South-Western and Central Ghana, and beyond. Its large compound serves as a healing-camp, where usually some 60 patients are in residence, together with their attendants. Most of these come from the interior of the country. Very violent cases of possession frequently occur during the ritual of this church, many of these being taken as manifestations of evil spirits. However, of the 150 odd adults who generally attend the healing services, only 30 or so actually derive from Saltpond itself. The life of this church is, therefore, not drawn from the Saltpond community.

The ritual of the remaining African churches lies, in all cases, to the middle of the continuum between the M.D.C.C. and the Twelve Apostles' Church. The other two Low Town sects are broadly similar to each other, their services including preaching around the themes of Biblical texts, as well as hymn-

singing, restrained dancing, and personal testimonies. Prayers for individuals are pronounced, with laying on of hands, but this aspect receives rather less emphasis than in some African churches, except on special request. Services at the still very small Church of the Lord ("Aladura") in Eguabadu, Upper Town, place rather more emphasis than these upon the formal aspects of Bible reading, preaching, and prayer. Nevertheless, here, too, the personal requirements of individuals are also catered for; testimonies are heard, and the Prophet bestows a personal revelation upon each member, together with his special prayer. Possessions often occur during the services of this church, though they are typically mild in their effect.

5. African Churches (b) Congregations. In spite of the variations between rituals in African churches in Saltpond, they are broadly similar, and contrast strikingly with, for instance, Establishment church services. Their congregations, too, are rather different, as the following paragraphs will show.

There are, incidentally, particular problems in following through the analysis of African church congregations. These, as one of their prophets explained, can include people of three descriptions. Firstly, there are those who have applied, formally, for membership. In addition, there may be some who have signed on with Establishment churches, but who, in fact, like Mrs. Harper (Case 5, p.173), attend regularly as "professed" members of their Establishment church, and "active" members of their African church. Lastly, there may be, from time to time, individuals who come to the church to make a particular request - perhaps for healing, or for material benefit - , but who have no intention of attending regularly. Their relationship to the church is one which may be termed "afflictive", in distinction to the "protective" relationship contracted by persons in the other two categories. Indeed, they are not in any real sense "members" of the church at all. They will not, therefore, be dealt with in the present chapter, although

the strategies which they adopt will provide an important topic for discussion later (see Chap. 10, pp.312-316).

To return to African church congregations as such, which are made up of persons of the first two of these types, one of their most striking features is that they consist very predominantly of women. As Fig. 6.2 (p.201) shows, out of six African churches in Saltpond, three have congregations which are 80% female or above. Two, indeed, are 90% female. No congregation in any church of another type comes within this range, and none of the African church congregations falls into the lowest range of 60% and under.

Their congregations, moreover, tend to be on the small side (see Fig. 6.1, p.178). Thus, it is rare to encounter more than a handful of men in any African church.

Active female members are generally engaged in the usual women's occupations, have received the education typical of their generation, and are not usually the wives or daughters of particularly eminent menfolk. Most first came to their church for the sake of its presumed "spiritual" advantages, often to secure conception, or the safe delivery of a child, or alternatively to provide for the health of their infants and themselves. Sister Araba and Maame Ekua are typical:-

> Case 19. Sister Araba. Araba is an active member of the Church of the Lord in Eguabadu, Upper Town, being one who is formally enrolled with the organisation. She is an Upper Saltpond woman, aged in her thirties, who lives in a lineage-owned house in Eguabadu with other lineage members. She has no education, nor any regular employment.
>
> Araba first approached the church because she had pains in her stomach. She had been to the local hospital about this complaint, but had only been referred on to a larger hospital in Accra. One of her relatives had suggested that she try, instead, a "spiritual" (or African) church. She had therefore come to consult the Prophet, by whom she had been healed.
>
> After this, Araba remained permanently in the church, and now attends regularly for the sake of "protection".

> Case 20. Maame Ekua. Maame Ekua, who is aged about 40 and has had no education, lives with her mother and other matrikin in a house in Kuranchikrom, Upper Saltpond. She is an active member of the M.D.C.C.
>
> She joined the church, several years ago, at a time when she was unwell. None of the hospitals in the District,

Fig.6.2. Attendance of women at Saltpond churches

Church	Type	Upper Saltpond		Lower Saltpond	
		Average size of adult congregation	Average % of women in congregation	Average size of adult congregation	Average % of women in congregation
Musama Disco Christo Church, Friday healing service.	African	35	90%		
Twelve Apostles' Church	African			50	90%
Church of the Lord	African	15	90%		
Prophet Prah's Life & Salvation Church.	African	locally resident: 30	85%		
Anglican Church	Establishment	55	75%		
Methodist Church	Establishment	250	70%	30	75%
Church of Christ Spiritual Movement	African			30	70%
Church of Pentecost	Fundamentalist	55	70%		
Musama Disco Christo Church, Sunday evening service.	African	70	65%		
Assemblies of God	Fundamentalist	35	65%		
African Faith Tabernacle Church	African			30	65%
Catholic Church	Establishment	250	60%		
A.M.E. Zion Church	Establishment	50	60%		
Jehovah's Witnesses	Fundamentalist	35	55%		
Presbyterian Church	Establishment	30	55%		

she tells, had been able to help her, and the many "traditional" priestesses (akɔmfo) whom she had consulted, including her own mother, had failed to cure her. When, however, she came to the Musama Church, and drank the water given her, she quickly recovered.

Maame Ekua now officiates regularly in the church as a Prayer Healer.

Female members of the Low Town African churches are very similar:-

Case 21. Maame Ɔsɔfo Ajowa Eni, and Madam Yaa. Maame Ajowa Eni, a woman in her mid thirties, belongs to a Lower Saltpond matrilineage. She grew up with her classificatory sisters in a lineage-owned house, brought up by her maternal aunts and grandmother. No member of the household, apparently, had any Christian attachment; all were adherents to "traditional" deities (abosom). She, herself, was provided at birth with an ábam, a form of individual cult object, which is believed to protect its owner, so long as its ritual requirements are met. She was not, as a child, sent to school. In due course, she married a fisherman, who derived from the nearby coastal town of Biriwa, and who, like herself, held no Christian beliefs, and had received no education.

Some time later, it happened that her husband fell ill, and consulted the then pastor at the African Faith Tabernacle Church in Low Town. The pastor took him to the church headquarters at Enyinam, in order that the Prophet might pray for him. Maame Ajowa Eni accompanied her husband. After the Prophet had advised that her husband was cured, he was brought back to Low Town, where he completed his recovery. At this, as he says, "his mind went to the church"; subsequently, he received ordination, abandoned the sea, and, in 1964, took over as the Lower Saltpond pastor (ɔsɔfo).

In the meantime, Maame Ajowa Eni's experiences at Enyinam had provoked repercussions in her household, for they had dramatically changed her convictions. On her return with her husband, she says, her grandmother produced a native medicine (édur) for them both to drink, but they refused this, and told her where they had been. At this, seemingly, Ajowa Eni was severely reproached by her grandmother, who demanded to know how she could go to a church, since it had been the nature-gods (ábosom) who had brought about her own birth, and since she had an ábam of her own? Ajowa Eni claims to have replied, simply, that if the ábam were brought to her, she would burn it. She remained a committed member of her new church, and now, assisting her husband, officiates in it as a Prophetess (ɔsɔfo).

Ajowa Eni has a sister, Madam Yaa, who, like herself, has had no education. Likewise, she has no specific occupation. Some time after these events, it is said, one of Madam Yaa's children fell ill. The mother took her to a "traditional" priestess (ɔkɔmfo), in the hope of finding a cure, but, in spite of spending a lot of money, met with no success. Maame Ajowa Eni advised bringing the child to the Faith Tabernacle Church, and, when this was done, she reputedly recovered. After this, Madam Yaa became an active member of the church.

The few men in these churches are typically artisans and labourers, or, in Low Town, fishermen. In Upper Town, they may have received at least

some education; in Low Town, where they are often illiterate, probably none. Most came to their churches, in the first instance, because they were ill, or to seek help in finding work when they were unemployed. In some cases, most of the active male members are regarded as elders, even though they may not be of exceptional "class" status. Alternatively, committed male members, like the Faith Tabernacle pastor referred to in Case 21, are not infrequently received into the ministry. Prophet Martin is an example from Upper Town:-

> Case 22. Prophet Joseph Martin. Prophet Martin has charge of the Church of the Lord in Eguabadu, Upper Town. He lives, though, not in Saltpond at all, but in Hawosodze, his own community, a mile away. He is aged about 50, and has an elementary education.
>
> By his own account, he had first come to the church about 8 years previously, with a certain request. This, he says, was granted in great measure, and he decided, therefore, to remain in the church. Before then, he had had no Christian affiliation.
>
> A few years later, the prophet who was then in charge, but who was about to move away, asked him if he would like to take over. He agreed, and his predecessor taught him how to order the service.

Characteristically, though, it is not only men who are admitted to the ministry of African churches; women, themselves, are equally eligible:-

> Case 23. The Rev. Anna Amo. Reverend Amo is the pastor of the Musama Disco Christo Church in Kuranchikrom, Upper Town.
>
> A "pastor", she explains, has a different role in the church to that of a "prophet". He (or she) carries out the "pastoral" work of the church, preaching, and baptising new members. He (or she) also has administrative responsibility, and must therefore be literate in both Fante and English. A "prophet", on the other hand, has the gift of the Spirit, and thus has the power to pray and to prophesy. Many pastors, she says, can, in fact, do the work of prophets, but not vice versa.
>
> Maame Amo is 49 years old, and comes from the town of Fanti Nyankumasi. She has an elementary education to Standard VI, and was originally a Methodist.
>
> She first went to the Musama Church because of sickness. When still a young woman, and, she says, while living in Saltpond with the then Methodist minister, she was apparently afflicted with diabetes. In search of healing, she took her way to Mozano, the church headquarters, where she met with recovery. At this, she joined the church formally.
>
> Later, having trained at Mozano, she was made a catechist. Her work prospered, and, before long, she was promoted to the position of deacon. She worked in this office for many years, in various towns in and around the Gomoa area, and finally took up her post in Saltpond a few months before the interview.

To sum up, it may be said that, unlike the Establishment churches in Saltpond, which are providing for the more privileged sections of the population, the African churches are catering for the less privileged. The "class" status of their members, both male and female, is relatively low. This is particularly evident if the Low Town groups, too, are included in the sample.

The membership of these churches is almost entirely female. The head of the local church may, admittedly, be a man, but, none the less, there are always important leadership positions available to women. In some notable instances, even the head of the church, herself, is a woman. Thus, it is fair to say, again in contrast to Establishment churches (c.f. p.186), that African churches are the province of women, rather than of men.

There is, however, one African church in Saltpond which has a rather more mixed character than the others, and this is the M.D.C.C. To begin with, its congregation - at any rate, at the most popular service of "spiritual" invocation - falls into the intermediate range of 65-75% female (Fig. 6.2, p.201). This is more like the congregations in most Fundamentalist churches. Secondly, the congregation includes a significant proportion of people with higher than average educational and occupational attainment. Among the elders, for instance, there numbers a young man of near graduate status, with a responsible managerial position in a local industrial enterprise. Mrs. Harper, too, the school-teacher (Case 5, p.173) is, if not representative of ordinary members, then certainly interesting for the sake of her presence in the church at all. In this respect also, therefore, the M.D.C.C. shows closer similarity to Fundamentalist churches - very different though their doctrines may be - than to the other organisations of its own type.

Musama Church services, as mentioned previously (pp.195-199), place a greater reliance upon written liturgies, and are generally more formalised, than those of the other African churches. It is these qualities, no doubt, which especially attract those among the more educated, including menfolk,

who find comfort in the "spiritual benefits" believed to derive from regular participation within an African church.

However, it is also interesting to note that this particular service is not intended primarily for healing. The very much smaller congregation at the M.D.C.C. Friday healing service is, in fact, usually composed of at least 90% women, and is therefore as predominantly female as the congregation in any other African church. This suggests that it is, specifically, their particular concern over health and childbearing which is impelling so many more women into the African churches than men.

A full explanation of the preponderance of women in these organisations - and, to a lesser extent, in certain churches of other types - would probably require a thorough study of the effects of marriage, both monogamous and polygynous, and of divorce. It would also need to take account of differential rates of migration between the two sexes.

Not enough data was collected for there to be any complete analysis of African church congregations in terms of place of origin. It may be said, however, that it is rare for an active member of one of these organisations to be involved with a church outside the division of town - Upper or Lower Saltpond - where he or she lives. (This is not necessarily true of those who approach a church for the sake of a specific affliction.) Most of these churches have a base in the native population, but some have also attracted immigrant sections. The M.D.C.C. in Upper Town - with its appeal to people in the "modern" employment section, many of whom derive from outside - is one. The African Faith Tabernacle Church, likewise, has secured the support of certain male immigrants living in Low Town. It is possible that this, too, helps to explain the unusually low preponderance of women in these two African churches, and also in certain Establishment and Fundamentalist congregations of similar character.

More will be said, both on the subject of women, and of immigrants, in the concluding section of the chapter.

6. Church Membership, Sex and "Class" in Saltpond. This chapter opened by asking who, in Saltpond, belongs to which kind of church, and why? It then described the principles which are widely acknowledged as governing, "by custom", the Christian church - or religious organisation of any other description - to which an individual should belong. But, it pointed out, these principles are, in some circumstances, ignored. It went on to consider some of the personal motives which commonly lead individuals to make a change in their church affiliations.

Having done this, it examined the congregations of the three different types, finding that they differ markedly in the "class" status of their members. Establishment church congregations are recruited, on the whole, from the relatively privileged "social class"; African church congregations, typically, are drawn from the underprivileged "class". Fundamentalist groups have an intermediate character. These distinctions, admittedly, are not rigid, for a measure of differentiation occurs even within a single category. This can mean that a church of one type can overlap, in the typical "class" status of its members, with another in a different category. Nevertheless, the overall pattern is clearly evident.

It is the contention here that active participation within an Establishment church is, in effect, a way of laying claim to membership of the higher, and more prestigious, "social class". As mentioned in Chapter 4 (p.133), Christianity has long been intimately connected, in local thinking, with Western education and paid, professional, employment. The "modern" educational and occupational systems are the very two factors which have been producing the new system of "social class". Thus, Christianity has come to be combined with school education and professional employment as a distinguishing characteristic of high "class" status. Those who wish to demonstrate their standing in this respect take care to attend an Establishment church.

The validity of this thesis is supported by the fact that people who

are brought up in Establishment churches, but who fail to match the "class" status of their fellows, tend to drift away. On the other hand, those whose status is appropriately high usually remain in their church, even though, on occasion, they may need to make supplication elsewhere. As case studies; in a later chapter will show (see, for instance, Case 33 , p.293 , and Case 35, p.297), they figure notably among those individuals who approach an African church prophet, in the event of a specific affliction, and who then go their way.

The connection between Establishment church membership and high "class" status is clearly recognised, in their own terms, by many of the local people. As a member of one such church put it:-

> "We know if somebody is of good parentage, because he will always come to church with us on Sundays."

Establishment church ritual, in its formalised style and in its emphasis on the English language, expresses, in part, the "class" status of its participants. Moreover, attitudes of these churches on social issues are in keeping with their members' "class" interests. Among the most noteworthy of these attitudes are, for instance, their insistence upon monogamy, and their general support for the nuclear family as against the corporate matrilineage (c.f. Chap. 11, p.331).

The inclusion of immigrants in Christian churches of all types is significant. A particular church may not acquire an ethnically-mixed congregation; indeed, some local churches have a character all their own, in that they cater almost entirely for members of a single, immigrant, ethnic group. Nevertheless, Christianity as such - and even Christianity of a particular type - unites individuals of varied ethnic background, both "insiders" of the local Saltpond communities, and "outsiders", by the ties of a common sub-culture.

There is another important difference which has been found to occur between church congregations of different types, and this is the striking variation in the proportion of women. In many Establishment churches, the

proportion of women does not greatly exceed their percentage among the total local population. In some African congregations, on the other hand, the preponderance of women reaches extravagant proportions. It was suggested, in the course of discussion, that women, particularly, are attracted by ritual of the kind practised in African churches, with its emphasis on healing and "protection".

In a later chapter (Chap.10, pp.317-322), it will be shown that the "protection" imparted is, in fact, protection against witchcraft, a force which strikes mainly within the matrilineage. Women, seemingly, feel themselves to be particularly vulnerable to this danger. The reasons for such apprehension can be expected to arise from their particular position in society.

There can be no question but that women, generally speaking, are seriously deprived, relative to men. Chapter 2 (pp.45-46,55-56), for instance, has demonstrated the disadvantaged position of women in the fields of education and employment. In one sense, women, who make up the bulk of the African church membership, are, indeed, the underprivileged "social class". Thus, it is consistent that there should be proportionately more women in the African churches than in the Establishment churches. This line of argument will be taken further, in an attempt to explain differing religious affiliations, in the final chapter of this work (pp.331-332,336-338).

African church members in Saltpond, incidentally, have a rather different background from that of their counterparts in certain other West African locations. Contrary to the state of affairs in, for instance, the city of Ibadan, as reported by J.D.Y. Peel[1], they have, on the whole, had no former Christian affiliation. Although some African church members have moved over from churches of other types, it is probably more significant that many others have converted direct from the "traditional" beliefs.

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[1] Peel 1968:204-211.

It may be said, in conclusion, that Christian churches of particular types - and even sometimes particular churches - unite members of interest groups based on factors such as ethnic origin, sex, and "class". These determinants clearly override, in their effectiveness, both the "customary" principles which govern church affiliations, and the diverse personal motives which individuals put forward to explain them. Of the three, "class" appears to be the most significant factor.

It is also the case that consistencies may be found between the ideologies and attitudes of churches of the different types, or the rituals in which they are enacted, and important concerns of their members.

But where, it may be asked, are the men who belong to the women in the African churches? They are not, certainly, in Christian churches of any other type. In Part IV, which deals with "traditional" religion in Saltpond, it will be suggested (Chap. 8, pp.259-261) that they are to be found in the politico-religious, and once military, asafo companies.

PART 1V. TRADITIONAL RELIGION IN A CHRISTIAN SETTING.

Chapter 7. THE TRADITIONAL NATURE-GODS AND THE INDIVIDUAL.

From Part III of this study, which demonstrated the thriving condition of Christian churches in Saltpond, it might well be concluded that "traditional" patterns of belief and ritual must be falling into disuse. This, however, is a question which deserves closer examination. It will be dealt with, therefore, in various aspects, in the chapters of Part IV.

These will explore whether "traditional" ritual is still practised in the Saltpond of the 1970s. More particularly, they will ask whether "traditional" religion is now peripheral and dying, or whether it still has significant functions of its own, even in its new context. In the process, the possibility will be considered that some elements only of "traditional" belief have been discarded, whereas others have been retained. If this is found to be the case, explanations will be sought for these differential responses.

The present chapter begins with an elucidation of the "traditional" cosmology, finding that the two principal foci of concern have been the spirits of the ancestors (nsamanfo, or often nananom: "grandfathers") and the nature-deities (abosom). The ancestral spirits fall outside the scope of this study, as it was defined in Chapter 1 (pp.31-33), and will not be covered here in any detail. On the other hand, the cults which have "traditionally" centred upon the nature-gods - who, in some respects, act as locality spirits - will be at the basis of the discussion in the following pages.

The next two chapters will specifically aim to assess what, if anything, are the powers and concerns still attributed to the nature-gods by people in Saltpond. Chapter 8 will consider the implications of these deities for the local communities; first, though, the focus of attention will be their significance for individuals.

It will also be enquired which other spiritual forces, if any, the

nature-gods are believed to counteract. This will lead, in Chapter 9, to a consideration of the importance of belief in witchcraft in the 1970s, which, itself, will contribute to the development of the discussion on sickness and healing. The discussion of these topics, which began earlier, in Part III (Chapter 6), will be concluded in Chapter 10. At that stage, the question will be asked whether any new institutions have arisen to oppose or supersede the "traditional" nature-god cults.

1. The "Traditional" Cosmology. The first step in a discussion of "traditional" religion must be to consider the extent to which the pattern of belief under "traditional" conditions can be established.

"Traditional" Akan world views have, in fact, been recorded in some depth by a number of writers, notably by R.S. Rattray and K.A. Busia[1]. More pertinently to the present work, J.B. Christensen, in the 1950s, reconstructed a "traditional" cosmology of the Fante, which was not greatly dissimilar to the other Akan patterns[2].

Informants in Saltpond in the 1970s could produce broadly equivalent versions of their own. The following account from Mr. Opoku was unusual only for its comprehensiveness:-

> "We Fante," began Mr. Opoku, "believe in the multiplicity of the deity. We also believe in the hierarchical institution of the realm of the deity. That is, we, before the advent of the European, believed in the one Great God controlling all things and lives of men. To this we called Twerammpon Kwame, literally meaning the one who if you lean on for support always remains sure, and is born on a Saturday and is male. He is also called Nyame or Nyankopon.
>
> "We referred to the sea, whom we revere, as a God, as Epo Kɔbina, meaning the sea born on Tuesday:- hence Tuesday is regarded as the day of rest for all fishermen. Sometimes we call him Nana Bosompo. We refer to the earth as Asaase Efua, meaning the earth or soil female born on a Friday; that is why Friday is the day of rest for all farmers.
>
> "We believe in gods, abosom, who inhabit stones (big ones), lagoons, queer trees with lianas and epiphytes growing on them, and any odd creation of nature. We believe in the ability of these gods to

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[1] Rattray 1923, Chap.4-20; 1927, Chap.1-4; Busia 1954:191-205; see also: Field 1960, Chap.2; Brokensha 1966:Chap.8.

[2] Christensen 1959:257-266; see also Christensen 1954a.

> influence men's lives either for good or bad. We believe in the god's aptitude to administer justice with impartiality, that is why we appeal to them in time of doubt. Some people have moulded effigies of gods in the form of clay and wooden carvings whom they worship.
>
> "There are male gods and female gods. It is believed that they do travel to visit each other and they do marry. There is also the belief that gods and ghosts move about the earth on midnights, even with their children following them.
>
> "We believe in the existence of ghosts (we call them nsamanfo) and life beyond the grave. That is why in former days we had special burial grounds for every particular ebusua[1], and these places were always looked upon as sacred places that has direct link with samanadze, the place everyone is supposed to go when he or she dies. Pouring libation is to me a way of bribing the departed souls of our ancestors, to be on our sides and to avert ill from plaguing our lives.
>
> "There is also the belief in dwarfs called mbowatsia, miniature mysterious human beings known to inhabit forests. These I hear hold the secrets of herbal medicine, and at times they abduct men and take them to the forests to teach them herbalogy.
>
> "Our fear has been disease and mortality, which we always believed as caused by witchcraft or as punishment from the gods. So side by side grew the priesthood for these gods and the sacred cult of herbalism, used in curing diseases."

All such reconstructions, whether the work of outside commentators, or of participants within the local culture, are of somewhat limited value for the present study. As regards the Akan literature, not every cult described within it can necessarily be assumed to have occurred even among some sections of the Fante people, let alone among all. Furthermore, although early writers on the Akan[2] refer to cults addressed to all of the spiritual beings mentioned by Mr. Opoku, they often fail to make clear the full significance of these cults, even in the "traditional" context they are describing. But in any case, these same cults, if they survive today, can be expected, under contemporary conditions, to have lost many of their former functions, and to have acquired new ones. For these reasons, the earlier published accounts may not greatly help towards an understanding of the present state of affairs.

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[1] ebusua: matrilineage
[2] e.g. Rattray 1923; 1927.

Contemporary verbal accounts of past times have to be regarded as scarcely more accurate, even though, ostensibly, they may relate directly to the Saltpond communities. No townsperson today can be judged, with any confidence, to have evaded influences from other Fante areas, or even from further afield. Oral history, in any case, is notorious for its distorting effect. Thus, no reconstructions of "traditional" forms of Akan cosmology, or cult organisation, can provide an adequate base for detailed analysis of the changing functions of particular cults, in Saltpond, over time.

Here, therefore, although the Akan literature may be cited at times for the sake of comparison, emphasis will be given largely to consideration of the present-day significance of certain beliefs and rituals which can be regarded as "traditional". In this context, the view of the past held even by a Western-influenced man such as Mr. Opoku - who is both relatively well educated, and a nominal Christian (Case 6, Chap.6, p.174) - is still relevant. His statement, quoted above, narrates the content of beliefs, the truth of which not everybody in Saltpond would deny. This will be very apparent from later sections of the chapter.

Both published authors and local informants, incidentally, are agreed on the point that, of all the spiritual beings encompassed in "traditional" cosmology, the principal objects of attention have always been the nature-gods and the ancestral spirits. The former provide the subject here. Thus, the following section will explore, to a further degree, the conceptions which are held in Saltpond regarding these deities, and the extent to which the beliefs still seem to influence people today.

2. The Nature-gods. In spite of the fact that the montheistic religions of Christianity and Islam have now gained overwhelming acceptance among the people of Saltpond, most native-born inhabitants can still point out features in the local environment - principally trees - which are, as they explain, gods (abosom; sing: bosom). Often they can identify the god by his name, especially if he happens to be one of the more important in the local pantheon.

Closer inspection will often reveal that offerings have been made at the site within recent months. Almost always, there will be found a length or two of calico, perhaps now faded, attached to the tree. Sometimes, there will be a bowl for libations at the base, and, in a few cases, the entire site will be protected by a fence of thick branches or bamboo. Such signs indicate that the deity is still the subject of regular, if only occasional, ritual attention.

This ritual - the province of the possession-priestesses referred to previously, and of the asafo companies to which they are connected (see Chap.4, pp.117-119) - will be detailed at a later stage (Chap.8, pp.243-250). The relevance of possession-priestesses for this chapter lies in their role as private consultants for the healing of sickness, and the averting of other misfortune.

To this end, each has in her keeping certain deities special to herself. These, taking the form of moulded or carved figures, will usually be shown to well-intentioned enquirers. Figures observed during this research were mostly human in character, although occasionally animal, or even abstract, shapes were encountered. They varied from a mere 6 inches, to nearly 3 feet in height, and from a rough manner of fashioning, to highly elaborate representational sculpture. Some of the figures were said to embody local gods who were in the priestess's special care. More often, though, they portrayed deities stated to come from very distant locations, and, in a few cases, ones whose origins appeared to be quite unknown. Whether local or distant in derivation, however, all were recognised as beings of the same kind, and all were referred to as abosom. Priestesses believed that these deities at their personal shrines required regular attention, just as did those in the outside environment. More will be said on this subject shortly (pp.227-231).

Well-grounded informants will sometimes divulge that neither figurines, nor natural features as such, constitute the deities, but rather that these

act as receptacles which the gods can enter. The same sources explain that objects, which are now revered, would have had no special quality, but for the fact that somebody took to offering sacrifices and pouring libations before them, thereby inducing a deity to enter in spirit form. (This, they allege, can be accomplished by anybody, with the use of anything, no matter how common-place; generally, however, the article chosen has some peculiarity which is thought to render it appropriate.)

The deities, then, are avowedly spiritual beings, but they are nevertheless believed to be capable to taking some kind of bodily existence. This is thought usually to occur during the hours of darkness, when they are said to be occasionally seen in weird human-like or animal-like forms.

Just as they are believed to enter material objects, the deities are also thought at times to enter people. Possession may be diagnosed from sickness or mental disorder, and is generally taken as a sign that the god in question requires some special course of action from the individual concerned. More particularly, this phenomenon is controlled and manipulated by the possession-priestesses, to provide the main justification for their status and actions (c.f. pp.217,225-227,229-231).

Under the "traditional" cosmology, the nature-deities were apparently recognised as wielding powers, and controlling events, in a manner which can still be described today by most inhabitants of the town, even by committed members of Christian churches. "Traditionally", the gods were believed to respond to supplication delivered through the mediation of their priesthood, by providing returns both of a general and a specific kind. Accordingly, they were thought to be able to send such benefits as a cure for sickness, financial success, and conception or safe delivery of children. Certain deities sometimes acquired a particular reputation in one field or another. In contrast to their curative activities, the gods were also thought to punish offenders, by sending them sickness or various other misfortunes. Whether this applied, though, to offences against an absolute moral code,

or against the god's own ritual requirements, or against the individual interest of his supplicants, is not always made clear.

A few informants, including some of the priestesses, are capable of greater generalisation on the subject of the gods' activities. People such as these affirm that the gods work to avert the effects of witchcraft or curse. Certain of the deities are said, moreover, to be able to identify an actual witch. (The subject of witchcraft will be discussed fully in Chapter 9; see, especially, pp.297-298).

Some priestesses claim, further, that their deities give them the knowledge to prophesy future events.

The gods are understood by some present-day informants to have acted quite independently. Others believe that they accomplished their work by conveying requests to higher authorities. This might have been,in some cases, another deity of superior power, such as Nana Bosompo, the sea deity. Generally, however, it would have been the Supreme Being, Nyame.

The nature-gods were approached by their priestesses - and indeed, at times, still are - both on behalf of individuals at special request, and on behalf of the state or "division" as a whole. This latter aim was achieved, as a matter of routine, by the periodic ritual during which the priestesses presented the local deities with food and drink provided by the community (the procedures are dealt with more fully in Chapter 8, pp.243-250). But any god could at any time indicate through his priestess, while she was in a state of possession, that he had some special need from the populace. Priestesses claim that requests of this kind, when transmitted to the Chief, had of necessity to be met. Most probably, though, the god concerned would be one of the more prominent of the local deities, and his voice would be most likely to be heard in the event of some misfortune threatening the whole community. Special action could apparently be taken in time of major emergency, marked perhaps by serious epidemic and frequent death; on these occasions, it is said, all the priestesses of the division might meet

together, and each perform her own possession-dance, thus channelling the concerted effort of all the deities available locally.

Deities with homes in the local environment were thought to exert an especial influence around the vicinity of their dwellings. The "traditional" locations of many of the Saltpond gods are indicated on Fig. 8.1 (p.239), a map which is believed by the writer to show all the major deities, but probably to omit large numbers of minor gods. The activities of these latter beings were recognised as extending only short distances, but the powers of the greater deities were acknowledged over wider areas, quarters of towns and entire towns. Pre-eminent among these, locally, were the three tutelary deities, respectively protecting the three divisions which, together, make up contemporary Saltpond.

Among these gods, one, Nana Eku, was thought to watch over the people of Upper Town - or, at very least, the people of No.1 division of Nkusukum State (c.f. Chap.4, pp.101-102) - from his tree-residence within the market at Ekuadaa, near the centre of the town. The people of Low Town, No.2 division of Nkusukum, were defended by Nana Kwesi Ɔsenaman, whose tree-home stands beside the road at the entrance to the village. The people of No.3 division were guarded by yet another god, quite separate but bearing the same name of Nana Ɔsenaman, who lived in a tree near their asafo company post, in their own quarter of town, Eguabadu (see also, on these deities, Chap.8, pp. 238-240).

Additionally, by some accounts, a more powerful god still, Nana Nkasaku, who inhabited the Nkasaku River which brings fresh water to the town, was acknowledged in all three communities. However, many townspeople were uninformed, or possibly unconcerned, about this matter, which seemed to attract greatest attention in the quarter of Kuranchikrom, through which the river largely flows. Informants in Low Town, moreover, showed keener interest in Nana Kofi Atufa, a deity believed to dwell in the Atufa Lagoon, beside which their village is built, and to which the River Nkasaku leads. The lagoon marks the border between Upper Town and Low Town territory. The

western border of Upper Town is marked by another lagoon, "traditionally" the home of a further very powerful god, by the name of Nana Kwesi Ndzema Enum, who was the tutelary deity of the neighbouring village of Kromantse.

These preceding paragraphs have presented conceptions of the nature-gods held by contemporary inhabitants of Saltpond, largely as if they were a view of the past. This, indeed, is the form in which they are often expressed to an outsider. Nevertheless, it is important to ask whether this "traditional" cosmology retains any particular hold over the populace today.

3. Contemporary Attitudes to the Nature-gods. Needless to say, perhaps, the churches, which have been shown to be becoming ever more firmly established, have officially condemned the "traditional" gods outright.

This position is still, from time to time, expounded from their pulpits. Thus, one preacher in an Establishment church based his sermon on the text:-

> "Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God?
> "But even the very hairs of your head are numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows." (Luke 12:6-7)

The text, he claimed, refuted the widespread notion that Almighty God is too remote to show concern for individuals, as well as the related view that only what he termed "fetish" can provide truly personal attention.

Fundamentalist sects, too, are consistent in their censure of "fetishism", but probably the most vehement attacks are voiced in the African churches. In one of those in which Biblical readings are given, the Prophetess, on one occasion, cited the passage:-

> "(Idols) have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not:
> "They have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not." (Psalms 115:5-6)

Therefore, she advised:

> "People should not go to Ekuadaa and drink medicines, for the gods cannot help. Only the Spirit of Jesus Christ is able to give people the things they need."

In this and other churches of the same type, personal testimonies repeatedly describe cases in which the nature-deities turned out to be unsuccessful,

but where the powers of Almighty God, Jesus Christ, or the Holy Spirit proved effective (c.f. p.221).

All informants in Saltpond seemed to be aware of the churches' discountenance of the nature-deities, and many active members offered personal opinions in conformity with their churches' views. For example, one old lady - illiterate, but an active Methodist (Madam Esi; Case 15, Chap.7, p.185) - replied firmly, when asked if she could give any information on this subject:-

> "I don't like to think of these things because I'm a Christian, and so I don't know anything about them."

Similar expressions of ignorance, or sometimes of ridicule, were often received from people of equivalent status within their churches, and also, occasionally, from some with merely nominal attachments.

But it must also be recorded that when enquiries were pursued more intimately, they often led to different results. Thus, many individuals were found who had not wholly accepted their churches' teachings. In order to determine whether the churches' doctrines had had a different impact at different levels of educational attainment, attempts were made to explore the topic at length with persons of varying school background. The conclusions thus reached are given in the following paragraphs.

Firstly, it was found that Saltpond males with little or no school education, both in Low Town and Upper Town, who on the whole had no church attachment, would usually avow frankly to their animist beliefs, and readily relate the names and characteristics of the nature-gods. So, too, in so far as they did not betray professional secrets, would possession-priestesses themselves, as well as many of their close kin, male and female.

However, many of the women who have no schooling, and most young people (male and female) with middle-school education, are attached, nominally at least, to one or other of the churches. Here is the remark of one such young woman, Mrs. Nsame, an "active" - though not always a very conscientiously attending - member of a Fundamentalist church (c.f. Case 18, Chap.6, p.192):-

> "I know," said Mrs. Nsame, "that the ministers in the churches do not like their members to go to 'fetish priest'.
>
> "That is because the ministers think that if you are a Christian, you must pray only to God above.
>
> "But I think it is right to pray both to God on high, and the gods here below. It was God who made them, and so they must be good."

At this level of education, belief in the nature-gods appeared to be virtually universal, and few people showed any great inhibitions in confessing to them.

Certain informants of this type, however, notably the more committed members of the African or Pentecostal churches, discussed the subject with a somewhat different emphasis. These were often people who had themselves at one time consulted nature-deities, and it was common to hear them witness to their experiences during their churches' services. The testimony given in the Musama Church by Maame Ekua, the prayer-healer (c.f. Case 20, Chap.6, p.200) is typical:-

> "Before I came to this church," she told the congregation, "I became sick. My relatives took me to the hospital, but I did not recover. Also they took me all round the District to different priestesses, but the gods did not help me. My mother herself has a god called Kwesi Abɔnsam, but even she could not heal me. Only when I came to the Musama Church and drank the water here did I become better."

A very similar story was narrated by a young male immigrant to the town, a Mr. Tetteh, who had completed his middle-school education, and had also undertaken two years' further study at the Assemblies of God Bible Institute. Mr. Tetteh affirmed:-

> "I was led into the church by spiritual processes. Once when I was working for a shipping company in Accra, I was afflicted by a spiritual ailment. This is something caused by abɔnsam or evil spirit. It began in my stomach, and spread all over my body. I had headaches, and I felt cold. It also causes mental troubles, although you are perfectly normal. I had just been promoted at work, and maybe it was because of jealousy.
>
> "I went to the hospital many times, but they could find nothing wrong. Then I went to 'fetish-women', and slaughtered any number of fowls and goats, and paid a lot of money. All to no avail. Then my mother persuaded me to go to Prah's Church. She was then a member in her own town. So I came to Saltpond and stayed for 3 months, and found a cure."

Mr Tetteh had subsequently come to feel a preference for one of the Pentecostal churches ("Biblically more correct"), but, his hopes of employment in their ministry failing to materialise, he was, for the time being, employed in clerical work for one of the local African churches.

It is significant that statements such as those on the previous page do not usually deny that the nature-gods exist. Often, indeed, the speakers actively acknowledge the gods' existence. Invariably, though, they focus upon the greater effectiveness of the persons of the Christian Trinity, accessible through African or Pentecostal churches.

People with higher levels of education are often, initially, very cautious when discussing the nature-gods. For example, the same Mr. Opoku whose version of "traditional" cosmology was quoted above (pp.212-213) - a man of young middle-age, educated to sixth form level, and, nominally, a Christian - took care to make plain:-

> "This is a Christian house. We live according to the big Bible in the corner, which says, 'Thou shalt have no other gods beside me'. Though I don't go to church. I pray to God in the house and hope he hears."

None the less, he commented later:

> "I have to admit there is a corner of myself which still believes in these things.
> "You must be careful of what you believe of what the akɔmfo[1] tell you. A lot of what they do is for show, just to make money, and the bɔsom[2] isn't there at all. But sometimes there is really a bɔsom there.
> "Myself, I am frightened of the abɔsom. Once, I saw one in the town of Kete, in the Volta Region. It looked like a very tall man, as big as a tree. It was very late at night, at the time of the festivals, when the abɔsom are abroad. My mother said that I would have to go to the ɔkɔmfo, but instead I left town."

But, he went on:

> "It is no good worrying what to do to please the abɔsom. There are so many of them. If you try to keep one happy, maybe there will be another one you have offended. And you will end up serving them. It is better to go straight to God above."

Thus did he arrive at a conclusion similar to those so often heard in

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[1] akɔmfo: possession-priestesses
[2] abɔsom: nature-gods.

the African churches.

Finally, lest it should be assumed that statements acknowledging the existence of the nature-gods come only from people without active involvement with Establishment churches, there is given below the opinion of an active and prominent Methodist. Mr. Mansen (Case 7, Chap.6, p.180) is an elderly man, with a full elementary education, who has considerable influence in Upper Town. Notwithstanding his position, he looks favourably upon the nature-god, Nana Eku, who, supposedly, looks after his own community. Mr. Mansen began by admitting:-

> "The church does not allow us to go to the gods."

But, he continued:

> "Pagans can go to Nana Eku at any time if they need something. They go to Okomfo Anan[1], and tell her what they need. If they are asking for a child, when it comes, they name it after Nana Eku. He is very strong. There are so many children in the town with this name."

Moreover, he was most emphatic that:

> ".... it is absolutely necessary that the asafo fence Nana Eku every year. If you did not fence him, you would leave him naked, and there would be sickness and trouble."

The problem of reconciliation of asafo participation with church membership, by such as Mr. Mansen, will be discussed in Chapter 8 (pp.256-263).

Statements, such as these given above, were confirmed by frequent allusions, heard from many quarters, in the course of the research. This led, of necessity, to the conclusion that there was little disagreement among Saltpond inhabitants as to the continuing existence and power of the nature-deities. This, at any rate, was apparently the case among those of them who were native-born.

Immigrants to the town tended to be more circumspect. No admissions of recognition of nature-gods were ever received, for instance, from members of the predominantly immigrant Christian groups, the Presbyterians or the

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[1] the possession-priestess responsible for the tutelary deity (Case 25, p.226).

Jehovah's Witnesses (though it must be conceded that none of the members of these two churches were encountered other than formally). The immigrant sector in Saltpond includes virtually all the most highly educated people resident in the town, and these - university graduates, and near equivalent - are the very individuals who might be expected to deny the nature-gods in real sincerity. Several such people gave warnings to the effect that the beliefs surrounding these deities were "nonsense".

Nevertheless, at least one who had so warned, Mr. Appiah, a graduate, who, for the duration of his residence in town, was taking a leading part within one of the Fundamentalist churches, himself made an acknowledgement to the nature-deities at a time of personal difficulty (see Case 39, Chap.9, p.305).

It can only be concluded that belief in "traditional" gods of this type is very far from dead. The real doubt, today, focuses upon the question of whether it is at all worthwhile making supplication to these beings. Certain of the townspeople distrust what they believe to be the deities' intentions; accordingly, they question the "official" version of "traditional" ideology, which lays down that the gods work to protect the honest townsman, punishing only the wrong-doer. Thus, Mr. Opoku (c.f. p.174; p.212; p.222) remarked:-

> "It is not true that the gods will look after you. Two years ago, my relatives were just dying one after the other. How can anyone say the gods are looking after us?"

But this debate over the character of the gods, just or capricious, may well be of very long standing. The newer uncertainty focuses upon the question as to which is the most effective route by which to petition for the exercise of spiritual power: whether, that is, effort should be diffused through the multitudinous nature-deities, or be concerted upon the one Supreme God. More will be said on this question in Chapter 10 (pp.311-316,327-328).

The present chapter will end by looking at nature-god cults, in their individual form. These are represented in the possession-priestesses.

4. Possession-priestesses. Differences may have arisen among townspeople with regard to the most beneficial direction for ritual supplication, but, until the present, at least, individuals have been coming forward to act as priestly intermediaries with the "traditional" nature-gods.

These people have achieved their positions by exhibiting a capacity for mental dissociation, and by having their condition diagnosed as possession by some or other deity. This is thought to give them the ability to communicate with the god concerned. In Saltpond, all such functionaries are female[1], and, therefore, the term by which they are known in Fante (akɔmfo; sing: ɔkɔmfo) will be translated here as "possession-priestess".

At the time of the research, priestesses in the town numbered at least ten. As mentioned previously (p.215), each was attached to the asafo company of the community to which her own matrilineage belonged. There were four priestesses in Low Town (including one normally resident with her husband in neighbouring Krɔmantse), three in the section of Upper Town managed by No.1 asafo company, and three (or possibly more) in the area of No.3 company. It was impossible to judge whether, over the generations, numbers had declined.

Most of the Saltpond priestesses were interviewed during the research, and all described the events leading to their accession to office in broadly similar terms. The following histories are typical:-

> Case 24. Ɔkɔmfo Efua Ata. As well as practising as a priestess in Lower Saltpond, where her matrilineage is located, Ɔkɔmfo Efua Ata cultivates a farm plot in her own account. In comparison with other women in her community, she is prosperous, and has in recent years built herself a house of her own, in which she lives with certain of her daughters and grandchildren. She has had no schooling, and is now in her fifties.
>
> She became a priestess, she says, about 15 years previously, as she knows, since her now teenage son was then little more than a baby.
>
> In her more guarded moments, she explains that she

[1] This is perhaps a very local pattern. Not more than a mile away from Saltpond, in the village of Krɔmantse, the senior of the "traditional" priests is male. Christensen, too (1954b:390; 1959:257,267), noted the existence of both male and female priests, reporting that the latter were, in general, regarded as less powerful. Among many other Akan groups, male priests would seem to be as common-place as female priestesses (c.f. Rattray 1923:147; 1927:39-40; Field 1960:61-65; Brokensha 1966:154).

first set up her shrine after she had been away for 4 years, learning how to prepare medicines, and perform her possession-dance, from the mbowatsia, the "little people" of the forest. She herself, she makes out, does not know where she went, or what happened to her, over that period. But, she says, it was the "little people" who, during that time, gave to her her gods (abosom), in the form of the figurines that now stand on her shrine. These she can name individually, though she only speaks their names with caution, since when she does, she says, the gods invariably come to her, and take possession of her unless she observes certain ritual precautions. The "little people", she reports, also gave her another ritual object, a tiny but exceptionally heavy stool, made in the "traditional" Akan style; therefore, she says, she has a place where the gods can come and sit, and thus are they enabled to come to her.

The above is one version of Ɔkɔmfo Efua Ata's life history. On another occasion, however, a second priestess, who came from the Kuranchikrom area of Upper Saltpond, explained, in the former's presence, that Efua Ata had come to herself, in order to learn what to do and how to dance. This her so-called "daughter" did not attempt to deny.

Ɔkɔmfo Efua Ata, above, is one of the more prominent of the Low Town priestesses, and, as will be shown later (c.f. Case 42, Chap.10, p.313), is not infrequently consulted by Upper Town people. Ɔkɔmfo Anan, whose case is dealt with next, is a priestess from Upper Town itself:-

Case 25. Ɔkɔmfo Anan. Ɔkɔmfo Anan is the senior priestess of No.1 asafo company.

Quite illiterate, and now more than 70 years old, she is frail with age. She belongs to an Upper Saltpond matrilineage, and lives in a lineage-owned house with some of her daughters, and various other female matrilineal kin. Her financial position, seemingly, is insecure.

Ɔkɔmfo Anan has held the responsibility for Nana Eku, the tutelary deity of Upper Town, and certain other prominent Upper Town gods, for more years than she cares to specify. Though her principal deities have homes in the local environment, she also keeps figurines for them at her personal shrine.

Before she, herself, took over the care of these gods, they were, she explains, in the charge of a previous priestess. Eventually, the predecessor died, and at this, says Ɔkɔmfo Anan, the gods "called upon herself" to take over.

One way in which a call of this kind may make itself felt is explained in the third, and last, case to be quoted here. Ɔkɔmfo Akotua's background, incidentally, differs from that of the other priestesses interviewed, all of whom had been wholly animist in belief even before their accession:-

Case 26. Ɔkɔmfo Akotua. Ɔkɔmfo Akotua, illiterate and in her fifties, combines her occupation as a priestess in Low Town with that of "middle-woman" in the fish trade (c.f. Chap.2, p.49). She also cultivates a "tiger-nut" plot, and is believed to be relatively prosperous.

Before becoming a priestess, she claims to have belonged to the Methodist Church. During that time, her mother's sister, who owned the house in which she then lived (and indeed still does), set up a shrine with nature-god figurines.

The aunt, so Ɔkɔmfo Akotua reports, had been taken away from her farm by the gods, and led into the bush. There she had remained for several days, without food, while the gods, reputedly, taught her what to do. The aunt is then supposed to have travelled further afield, reaching as far as Obuasi, in the Ashanti Region, before returning home to practise as a possession-priestess.

In 1960, apparently, this former priestess died, and, not long afterwards, Ɔkɔmfo Akotua began, she says, to shake violently. Unable to eat or drink, she realised that the gods of her predecessor were coming to herself. So, she explains, she stopped attending her church, and went to learn the arts of her trade from an established possession-priest (a man), in a location she would not specify. She stayed with him for 3½ years, and then, on completion of her training, she returned to take charge of her predecessor's shrine.

The above examples mention all of the most characteristic experiences reputedly undergone by women acceding to the priesthood. These begin with the "call" of the nature-deities (abɔsom) - shown by some form of mental or physical disturbance - to a sojourn in the forest, or some other distant place. There, the neophyte is supposedly instructed in the techniques of medicine, and of dance, by either the gods (abɔsom), or the "little people" (mbowatsia). Some practitioners admit to having trained with established priests or priestesses, often in distant towns. In a few cases, deities are acknowledged to have been derived from a deceased predecessor, a matrikins-woman or even some other quite unrelated woman resident nearby.

5. The Shrine Ritual of Possession-priestesses (a) Private. All possession-priestesses, having acquired deities of their own, take pains to maintain their gods' presence at their shrines, and contact with themselves. This is felt to be essential. Thus, the very elderly Ɔkɔmfo Anan in Upper Town ceased to receive clients altogether when, following an illness, she feared that her gods had left her (in due course, apparently, they returned).

But in spite of this concern of theirs, priestesses say that they do not, in the normal course of events, make offerings to their gods on their own account. Usually, they do this only on behalf of clients, when the remaining portion of the drink brought for use as a libation is left on the shrine to sustain the gods. Priestesses express their own solicitude for their deities principally at the festival, part public and part private, which each is supposed to observe annually. (There is, however, some evidence of a decline in this respect, as will be shown below, pp.230-231.)

Unfortunately, I was unable to witness any instance of the private shrine ritual in its entirety. Nevertheless, it did not appear that the rites were regarded as strictly secret. I visited one priestess, by chance, when her personal festival was in its concluding stages, and another when hers was just over; in both cases, entry was encouraged. Other priestesses described their own private rites - with varying degrees of lucidity - in terms broadly consistent with such observations as I was able to make.

On these evidences, it appears that the private annual ritual takes the following form. The actual date is decided by the priestess herself, and can be at any time of the year. Usually the same day is chosen year after year, but this can readily be changed. Some time beforehand, the priestess asks the Chief of her own community for food to give to her deities; one claimed to have received ¢8 that year (£2-67 in 1973) with which to buy eggs. Some profess to kill a hen or a sheep for their gods, but the essential food-offering is the so-called ɔtɔ, mixed from eggs, yam, and oil.

On the appointed day, the priestess opens her shrine to display. The shrine, in most cases, stands in a corner of her own room, and she merely draws aside the curtain of white calico, with which it is normally concealed. The figurines are bathed with "medicines", and, in some cases, clothed with newly-made white cotton garments. Then the ɔtɔ is prepared, and given to the deities (this is done, in the case of the human figures, by smearing it over their mouths). According to custom, gifts are brought by well-wishers,

and by beneficiaries of the gods concerned; these take the form either of money, or alcoholic drink, or sometimes, in season, the fruits of the harvest. The alcohol is used for a further essential part of the proceedings, the offering of libation to the deities, but, usually, only a portion is expended. The remainder is left at the shrine for the gods, and for use on another occasion. At the time of the various offerings, prayers are said by the priestess on behalf of the giver. The event also gives her occasion to pray for the welfare of her own household. Any children living in the house are bathed with "medicines", and then smeared with white clay. To conclude the ritual, the priestess herself eats the remainder of the food which was offered to her deities.

No suggestion was ever received, incidentally, that priestesses become possessed during the private part of their festivals. This is far from the case during the public festival.

5. The Shrine Ritual of Possession-priestesses (b) Public. At her public festival, the priestess's performance of her possession-dance (akɔm) is the very focus of interest.

One such event, which this time was witnessed by the writer directly, is described below:-

> The annual festival of Ɔkɔmfo Efua Ata. Ɔkɔmfo Efua Ata (c.f. Case 24, p.225) held the public festival for her deities on the last day of the year (1972), having observed the private ritual two days previously. (This was confirmed by a chance visit of mine, when the shrine was seen on display with food offerings in place, the proceedings being only recently completed. I was unable to discover whether there had been any other private preparations for the public festival.)
>
> The public festival took place in an open space outside the priestess's house in Low Town, where stools were set out for herself, the senior members of her household, and any important visitors.
>
> The priestess, her face decorated with white clay, arrived early, and sat quietly, as if concentrating intently, while the spectators collected together. Meanwhile, some small boys were playing upon the drums and gongs, and, after a while, one of the women of the priestess's house, a matrikinswoman, went to them to teach them the proper rhythm for the priestess's gods. In due course, however, the drumming was taken over (with some argument over the correct rhythm) by men from the Low Town (No.2) asafo

company, and the festival began in earnest.

Now spectators began to gather more thickly, until eventually there were 50 or more adults present, the majority women, as well as countless children. There was intermittent singing. To open the proceedings, two of the women of the priestess's household entered into a dance, the pattern of which, like the drum-rhythm, was strictly defined (both were said by informants to "belong" to these particular gods). The first dancers were quickly joined by the priestess herself, but, before long, the gods "descended" upon her, and she retired indoors to change into her ritual costume.

She emerged dressed in a raffia skirt and bedecked with charms. She was bare-breasted, and revealed patterns of white clay painted upon her arms, shoulders, and legs. Carrying a small brush, she paced continuously to and fro, for, it was explained, while the gods are upon her, she cannot remain still.

Now she began to dance, sometimes according to the set pattern, sometimes in variations upon it, and sometimes with steps entirely different. Spectators would, from time to time, join her in the arena, in order to "dash" her sums of money ranging from about 20 pesewas to one cedi (7 to 33 new pence; 1973). Succeeding dances built up with increasing liveliness, but, between-times, the priestess resumed her calm, though apparently compulsive, pacing. She was, as there was no reason to doubt, in a state of dissociation, but her condition appeared all the while to be within her control; she could still acknowledge her acquaintances, and could at any time enter into a lucid conversation.

After perhaps an hour of this, the priestess, still in her state of possession, began to hand out brushes to women in the audience, this constituting an invitation to dance for the gods. Only women may dance for these particular gods, and an invitation must be accepted, or repudiated in cash. This presents some women with a dilemma, for the 40 or so pesewas required is not usually spared easily; however, most of the women present who belonged to one or other of the Christian churches chose to make the cash payment, rather than publicly to identify themselves with the cult. (This was so of Mrs. Nsame, a young woman who admitted to having consulted the priestess in private; see Case 42 below, p.313, and, for her church affiliation, Case 18 above, p.192). There was now a general atmosphere of enjoyment, the priestess's kinswomen provoking a series of seemingly vehement arguments, which would suddenly erupt into laughter.

Events continued in much the same manner for several hours, the drum-rhythms continuing unchanged throughout. Spectators began gradually, now, to depart, as also, in due course, did the writer, and the conclusion of the proceedings was not witnessed.

Public festivals of the above description seem, nowadays, to be rare. Informants in Saltpond, and particularly those from Upper Town, often remarked how, "formerly", the possession-priestesses would come out to dance. Usually they added, though, that this no longer happens. The priestesses

themselves mostly claimed to hold their public festivals regularly, but, nevertheless, almost all put forward justifications - each in its way convincing - for not doing so during the actual twelve months of the field study. The example given above remained the one and only instance of a public festival held by any possession-priestess during the field period, and perhaps it was not coincidence that the event took place in the more secluded settlement of Low Town. In this respect, it is probably fair to conclude that the cults have suffered a decline[1].

On the other hand, not one of the priestesses who were interviewed admitted to having neglected the private part of her annual ritual. The Upper Town woman whose private rites were witnessed by me in their last moments, explained on a later occasion:-

> "I did not hold the festival this year. I only hold it sometimes.
> "This year, when I took food to the gods, I only bathed them. This I must do every year."

6. Possession-priestesses as Private Consultants. The services provided by possession-priestesses fall into two categories. Some of their activities are performed on behalf of the community, as will be shown in a later chapter (Chap.8, pp.243-250). Others, which are the concern at present, are practised for the sake of individual clients, who have deliberately sought the gods' assistance. Tasks of this last kind provide the major part of any successful priestess's work.

Among other Akan groups, apparently, remedial sessions are not uncommonly held by possession-priests in public[2]. Typically, on these occasions, the shrine drummers are summoned, spectators gather, and the priest allows himself to become "possessed" by his deity. Anyone suffering from affliction may then relate his troubles in the hearing of the audience. Thereupon, the priest, supposedly acting as the mouthpiece of whichever god is "present", prescribes the remedy before the assembled company.

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[1] J.B. Christensen has earlier (1954b:396; 1959:272) drawn attention to the decline in public festivals held for nature-deities among the Fante.
[2] See especially Field 1960:88,98-104.

The Fante material makes little mention of events of this kind, the most relevant publication[1] being somewhat uninformative in this connection. However, no reports were received from Saltpond informants, during this research, to suggest that public consultations of this nature ever took place in the town. Certainly, nowadays, all consultations are held privately, and it remains an open question whether there has been any change over the generations in this respect.

Consultations being normally private, it proved impossible for me to witness, directly, any cases of exceptional importance or interest. The content of such consultations, therefore, could not be ascertained from observation. Priestesses themselves claimed the ability to cure sickness, to bring about conception, to ensure the safe delivery of babies, and to secure the health and well-being of children. Some professed to having additional gifts, such as the ability to cure male impotence, or to counter possible evil influences in a new house. According to the priestesses, success is achieved by means of a suitable medicine (edur; c.f. Chap.9, p.288), this sometimes to be taken internally, or else to be applied externally in the form of a cream or lotion, or, occasionally, be retained for use as a charm. All clients are required to pay a fee, and to bring a bottle of gin or schnappes for a libation; the libation is poured to the priestess's deities during the consultation, while she recites the necessary prayers.

This latter practice was confirmed by observation on several occasions, in cases of trivial sickness, and other matters of similar small weight. Personal histories in a later chapter (Chap.10: Case 41, p.313; Case 42, p.313) also tend to support the priestess's accounts of their procedures.

The magnitude of the priestesses' clienteles was not a subject which could be checked. Certain priestesses appeared to be living in very straightened circumstances, others in relative ease, though their differing circumstances did not always accord with their reputations in the community.

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[1] Christensen 1959:257-258.

Nevertheless, it is likely that certain priestesses practise their occupation to a significant profit, and others to rather less.

7. Other Healing Agencies. Consultation with a possession-priestess is not the only option available to someone troubled by sickness.

One alternative of a "traditional" kind is offered by the herbalist (onunsinnyi; pl: enunsifo), who is widely considered to possess a more profound understanding of herbal medicines that that held by possession-priestesses. Informants were encountered in Saltpond who claimed to have visited herbalists, although all named men practising in other towns. One of the most renowned herbalists, locally, lived in the village of Krɔmantse, a mile away. His reputation lay particularly in his skill as a bone-setter, but herbalists can be consulted over ailments of any description. Many Saltpond informants attributed what they saw as the herbalist's superior efficacy to a spiritual factor, the herbalists being thought to be in constant communication with the mbowatsia, the "little people" of the forest, who, supposedly, hold all the secrets of medicines.

Enquiries pursued outside Saltpond confirmed that ritual techniques were included in the herbalists' procedures, and their work could, therefore, be validly encompassed by the present study. However, although statements were received to the effect that herbalists were still practising in Saltpond itself, no such practitioner was actually traced in the town during the research. Although it is feasible that there were some present who remained undiscovered, their work will, for this reason, not be dealt with in detail[1]. Nevertheless, they stand firmly within the range of choices open to those in the town who become afflicted by sickness.

A different option which swept across Ghana, and adjacent parts of West Africa, during the 1940s and 1950s, was provided by new types of anti-witchcraft cults (the so-called "drinking-medicine cults"). Their

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[1] Christensen (1959:258-259) includes a brief passage on the work of Fante herbalists. Their work among the Asante is described by Rattray (1927:38-39).

shrines are said to have been acquired as private ventures, mostly from Northern Ghana[1], and among them, one by the name of Tigare appears to have been the most popular in the Fante area[2]. As has been mentioned by J.B. Christensen[3] - and described more fully by P. Morton-Williams, working elsewhere in West Africa[4] - these cults used to organise group rituals for the purpose of detecting witches. Medicines were prescribed, in order, supposedly, to induce confessions.

These cults appear, however, to have declined in recent years. Tigare as such seems, from present-day reports, never to have been established in Saltpond, the nearest shrine being in neighbouring Krɔmantse (where its priest died, just before the start of this research, in 1972). In Saltpond itself, apparently, there was in Upper Town, during the 1950s, a cult known by the English name of "Power", the activities of which are said to have been broadly similar. This, too, had, by 1973, long ceased to operate.

Nowadays, another choice open to patients is, of course, the hospital, conveniently situated in the centre of the town. There, at the time of this research, treatment was entirely free. Alternatively, there are now the newer Christian healing churches mentioned in Chapter 6 (pp.193-205).

In a later chapter (Chap.9, pp.301-306), there will be a discussion of the different causal agents which, people in Saltpond believe, are likely to bring about sickness. This will be followed (Chap.10, pp.311-316) by an evaluation of the grounds on which people choose between the various agencies of healing mentioned here.

First, though, it is necessary to conclude the treatment of the "traditional" nature-deities.

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[1] Christensen 1954b:389; 1959:276; Ward 1956:47,52-53; Debrunner 1959:106-107; Field 1960:88; McCleod 1975:112. Goody (1957:357-358) and McCleod (1975:107-110) argue that cults of this type were appearing at least 50 years earlier.

[2] Christensen 1954a:76; 1959:276.

[3] Christensen 1954b:390,396. Also Ward 1956:53n.3,55-56; McCleod 1975:112,114-115.

[4] Morton Williams 1956:316-320.

8. The Contemporary Significance of Nature-god Beliefs. In the present chapter, it has been found that belief in the "traditional" nature-gods is far from dead. This has been shown to be the case even among Christians, not only the merely professed, but also the fully active.

It is clear, therefore, that an individual's formal ritual attachment is not always in complete accordance with his personal beliefs. The two are different, and different explanations are needed to account for them.

It is, of course, hard to determine the nature of an individual's private beliefs with any real assurance. On the other hand, it is perfectly possible to observe the kind of ritual action he resorts to when in time of urgent personal need. Chapter 10 (pp. 313-318) will show that this, too, is often inconsistent with his formal religious affiliation.

The "traditional" nature-gods themselves no longer seem, very significantly, to provide a focus for formal ritual attachment. This, at least, is the case in the context of possession-priestesses' individual cults, which have been the concern here. It is difficult to establish whether gatherings at priestesses' shrine sessions ever approximated, among the Fante, to a communal cult, one which, perhaps, was particularly attractive to women. Certainly, though, they do not seem to achieve this object today. As the previous chapter indicated (pp.200-205), women seem to be moving, for the purposes of formal religious attachment, towards the African churches.

With regard to occasional ritual action, however, Chapter 10 will suggest that the "traditional" nature-god cults, in the manifestation considered here, still cater, to a significant extent, for women. These latter, it will be shown, make up the greater part of priestesses' clienteles.

The nature-deities have a further significance, which relates to the whole community, rather than to individuals. This aspect of theirs is dealt with in the chapter which follows.

Chapter 8. TRADITIONAL NATURE-GODS IN THE LOCAL COMMUNITY: ASAFO RITUAL AND RITUALS OF STATE.

The "traditional" nature-deities or abosom - the gods who, supposedly, dwell in rivers, rocks, and trees (c.f. Chap.7, pp.212,214) - have a ritual importance, not only for individuals, as described in the previous chapter, but also for the community at large.

This standing has been achieved partly by virtue of the nature-gods' implications for chiefship, but more particularly through their connection with the asafo military companies, the men's associations of the respective local communities (see Chap.4, pp.101-102,109-123). Earlier chapters have described the relationship which holds between chiefship and asafo in the town, and have elucidated the contemporary political function of these two institutions (see Chap.4, pp.104-105,122-123,123-129). The task, now, will be to discuss the extent to which the "traditional" nature-gods retain any ritual significance for present-day political organisation. This will mean that attention must be directed most prominently upon their involvement with the asafo companies.

1. Nature-gods and the Asafo Companies. The importance of the nature-gods (abosom) for Fanté asafo companies has already been emphasised in the work of J.B. Christensen[1]. Referring to the elaborate "company posts" (posuban) of the various asafo groups - the concrete structures which serve as both monument and storehouse (c.f. Chap.4, pp.110-111) - , Christensen writes:-

> "In the immediate vicinity is a tree ..... surrounded by a split-bamboo fence. This tree, with whatever rocks and other materials are enclosed by the fence, is believed to be an obosom."

He continues:

> "In addition to the gods at the company post, all of the abosom in the section ..... of town surrounding the post are believed to be company property, or particularly favourable to them."

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[1] Christensen 1954a:112-114.

But, he concludes:

"The primary obosom of the etsikuw[1] is the company drum."

Christensen's material was collected in towns other than Saltpond, but it is, for the most part, consistent with the Saltpond data. Nevertheless, in the present study, further significances were discerned, which were either absent in Christensen's locations, or else neglected by him.

In Saltpond, the "company posts", themselves, appear to hold a meaning not unlike that attached to them previously by Christensen[2]. Some of the townspeople refer to these large structures as abosom (gods), but this, in itself, is misleading. Other informants prefer to explain the company post as a shrine, a term which more accurately conveys its significance, and which was, indeed, used in Christensen's own writings. The structure is believed to house the deity (or deities), not to embody it directly. Accordingly, the vivid sculpted forms, which embellish it, are not intended as representations of gods, but are rather symbolic statements of the manly qualities claimed by members of the company (see Chap.4, p.111).

Asafo belief and ritual are not readily disclosed by informants, and there can be little assurance that a good part did not remain concealed from me. Nevertheless, it was said by informants - and this there is no reason to doubt - that the principal deity (bosom) residing inside the company post is, as Christensen reports, the asafo drum. This is generally stored within the structure, along with other asafo regalia. An asafo drum, incidentally, takes a conventional, slightly elliptical, form. It is played slung over the drummer's shoulder, and can be sounded in different tones to convey messages. The principal drum of the Low Town (No.2) company, however, is different, being long and thin in shape. This instrument, which bears the name of Nana Ɔtseguan ("He who hears it flees away"), is especially revered, and secures the admiration even of members of other companies. Every company possesses, in addition, drums of lesser importance, which it regards as

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[1] etsikuw: a single asafo company
[2] Christensen 1954a:112.

subordinate deities; in Low Town, one of these is accorded the position of Ɔtseguan's wife. In spite of the fact that the same Fante term is used to denote both these drum-deities and the gods living in the natural environment, the connection between the two remained obscure[1].

Deities of the latter variety are also ritually acknowledged by the Saltpond asafo companies. Near the company post, as Christensen says, there is usually a particular tree which is recognised as a god (bosom)[2]. This has, seemingly, no connection with the deities residing inside these structures. Nor does it appear to have - as Christensen implies is the case, elsewhere - any more special relationship with the asafo company which the other nature-gods living in the local environment lack. Indeed, there is, in Saltpond, more variability in the location of these tree-deities than Christensen allows.

The site of the No.3 company post conforms closely with Christensen's description (see map, Fig. 8.1, p.239). Immediately adjacent to the relatively simple concrete edifice belonging to the company, there stands a tree of so great an age that, now, virtually only a ring of young off-shoots remains. Throughout most of the year, this is protected by a circular wooden fence. The composite tree is understood to be a deity, not only by the company as such, but also by non-members living nearby. He is, in fact, Nana Ɔsenaman, the deity who, as his name explains, is believed to watch over the whole community which comprises the Eguabadu quarter of Upper Saltpond (c.f. Chap.7, p.218). No.3 asafo company recognise this deity as the senior among their gods.

The particularly elaborate company post of No.2 asafo group, the Lower Saltpond company, has not one, but three tree-deities in the immediate

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[1] Christensen, however (1954a:113-114), who offers a brief account of the ritual involved in the manufacture and consecration of asafo drums, traces their spiritual connotations back to the living tree in the forest from which they have derived.

[2] Christensen (1954a:112) reports this tree itself as being sometimes referred to as the posuban. This usage was not encountered in Saltpond, where the term posuban was apparently applied only in the alternative sense mentioned by Christensen, i.e. to the concrete edifice of the company.

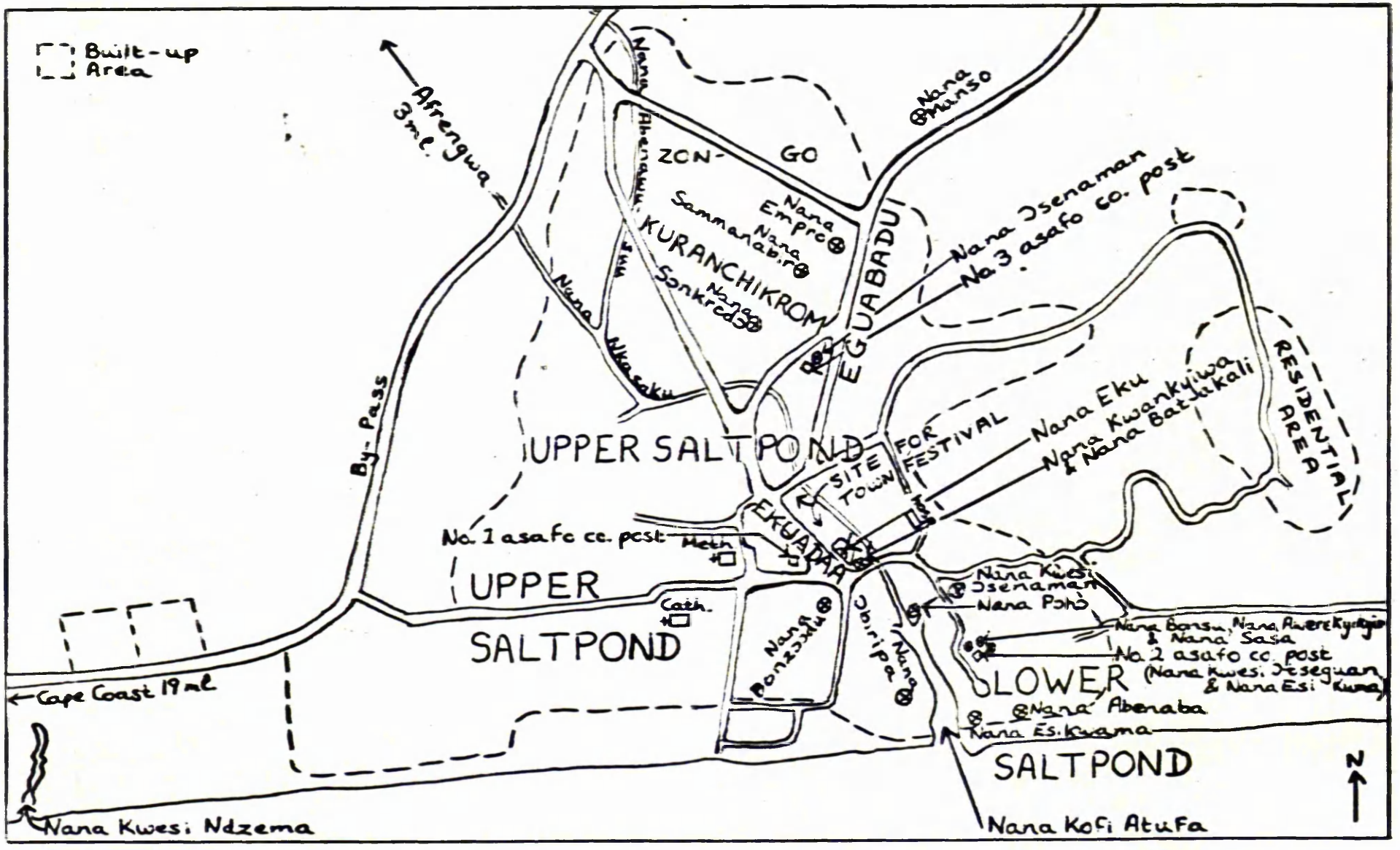

Fig.8.1. Map of Saltpond, showing Upper and Lower Saltpond sites attributed to the principal local deities or nature-gods.

vicinity. Each is surrounded by a low concrete wall. Local residents are aware of their ritual significance, but only exceptionally well informed persons - such as asafo priestesses - appear to be able to give their names (Bonsu, Awerɛkyikyir and Sasa). Asafo members in general express greater interest in their drum-deity, Ɔtsɛguan. Moreover, none of the three gods residing near the company post holds any pre-eminent position among the gods of the Low Town community. In this instance, the tutelary deity, likewise known as Nana Ɔsɛnaman, stands some distance away, guarding the road leading into the settlement.

The situation with respect to No.1 company, in Upper Town, is different yet again. As many as four trees grow near the company post, in the Abɛase quarter, and a number of local residents take these to be the homes of nature-deities. Others, however, with a better knowledge of the affairs of their community - including asafo members themselves - deny that this is so. (In any case, one of the trees, they tell, was planted in Independence Year by Kwame Nkrumah, simply as a memorial.) The tree-deity which this company acknowledges as senior among its gods is Nana Eku, the tutelary deity of the Upper Town community, who stands, fenced, in the market-place, 100 yards or more from the company post. It may, perhaps, be taken as corroborative of this version, that the senior possession-priestess attached to No.1 company has been observed by the writer, on ritual occasions, to pour libations before the tree-home of Nana Eku, as well as into the company post for the deities within. She offered no such attentions in front of any of the four trees standing nearby.

But even the subordinate nature-gods of the locality should, in the companies' belief, receive their due ritual recognition. As Christensen also noted (see above, p.236), all the deities living in the vicinity of the company post are considered to be in the ownership of the company in question. Such gods are numerous in Saltpond, but vary in their importance, and correspondingly in the degree of concern regarded as appropriate to each.

The more prominent among them are named on Fig.8.1 (p.239).

Most of these have remained the subject of fairly frequent ritual attention, since it is not unknown for supplicants to come to them, through their priestesses, with particular requests, which require that extra offerings be made to them (c.f. Chap.7, pp.231-232). Some, such as Nana Atufa of No.2 company, the god living in the Atufa Lagoon, rank almost commensurate with the tutelary deities of their respective communities. Lesser deities may receive little attention, other than their annual propitiary libation. Still others, not warranting even this much consideration, are nevertheless given a formal drum-salute by the asafo company of the area, whenever it parades past their residence.

The principal occasion for the acknowledgement of deities by an asafo company occurs during the period of the annual community festivals. These will be described in the following section.

2. Community Festivals for "Traditional" Deities. Among many of the peoples of Southern Ghana, the annual festivals observed by towns and villages mark a high point in the calendar[1]. J.B. Christensen has described, as typical of the Fante peoples, a cycle of festivals opening and closing with the Ahoba ceremony[2]. By his account, Ahoba, which was performed separately by the various matrilineages, allowed for the acknowledgement of lineage ancestors, and for the mourning of recent lineage dead. It involved feasting, conviviality, and visiting between lineages, but its central feature consisted in the offering of food and drink to the ancestral spirits. Christensen conceded, however (writing in the 1950s), that these practices were no longer followed by Christians. In Saltpond, certainly, whether for this reason or some other, Ahoba is not observed[3].

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[1] For examples famous within Ghana, see Opoku 1970. The Odwira and Adae ceremonies of the Asante which are described by Rattray (1923:92-104; 1927:122-143) and Busia (1951:27-36; 1954:202-204) are not direct equivalents.

[2] Christensen 1954a:31-34,116.

[3] Christensen (1954a:34) noted that Christians were by then observing similar practices at Christmas. This was broadly true in Saltpond in the 1970s.

Nevertheless, there is a broad similarity between the remaining rituals of the cycle which Christensen describes, and such festivals as are performed in Saltpond in the 1970s. Small divergences can be explained by the fact that Saltpond does not provide the seat of a Paramount Chief. Further to these, the entire cycle seems to occur at least a month later than Christensen's timetable[1] suggests.

Saltpond, it should be remembered, "traditionally" encompasses two, or in another sense three, distinct political communities (see Chap.4, pp.101-102). Upper Town and Low Town are organised quite separately, each under its own Chief (ɔhen). Upper Town, itself, comprises two divisions (No.1 and No.3) of Nkusukum State, the Upper Town Chief's claim to overall authority being disputed by some supporters of the Sub-Chief (ɔdzekurow) in No.3 division. The Saltpond festivals which were observed most closely by the writer were those held in Upper Town, principally in No.1 division, and it will be those which are mainly described here.

The Upper Saltpond festival period opens, not with Ahoba, but with the Stool Festivals (Orotoeguado). These are observed by the various Stool-Holding matrilineages[2] for the express purpose of "renewing the Stools". All the lineages hold their festivals during the same week in mid August. The rituals are never omitted, even in cases where the Stool-Holder and lineage elders are Christians. Informants explain that in the essential part of the ritual, a sheep is slaughtered, and the blood allowed to splash over the Stool; afterwards, the Stool-Holder lays pieces of the cooked meat, and portions of ɔto (made from mashed yam and egg), upon the Stool, and pours a libation. In the extended version, visiting well-wishers are entertained, and the Stool-Holder comes out in all his finery to dance, but this elaborate procedure is adopted only occasionally, because of its cost. This is considerable, even taking into account the notional "eggs" (actually given

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[1] Christensen 1954a:31,n.1.

[2] It was not discovered whether this applies to lineages possessing unrecognised Stools (c.f. Chap.3, pp.79-80; Chap.4, pp.103-104).

in cash) which are ceremonially presented by the guests in contribution towards the expenses. According to Christensen, there is a real difference between the purpose of the Stool-Renewal ritual, and that of the Ahoba festivals mentioned above (p.241); the former, by his account, was performed in propitiation of previous Stool-Holders, the latter in recognition of all matrilineage ancestors, male and female[1]. The present research, while suggesting that such a distinction might well be appropriate, produced no definite confirmation. Fortuitously, perhaps, no example of a Stool Festival was witnessed directly. For this reason, and since, moreover, ancestral cults fall beyond the scope of this study, the Stool Festivals will be given no more detailed treatment here.

Before leaving the subject entirely, though, it should be mentioned that the Stool Festival of the Paramount Chief at Yamoransa stands as the State Festival of Nkusukum. All the Divisional Chiefs (whether of the rank of ɔhen or ɔdzɛkurow) should by custom attend, and, after the Paramount has come out to dance, make a presentation of their "eggs". However, for reasons which will be discussed later (p.284), in 1973 the Upper Town Chief neither attended the ceremony, nor sent any contribution.

After the Stool Festivals, there come next, in the cycle of ceremonies, the Wɔtwandua ("tree-cutting") festivals, when the various asafo companies cut down trees with which to fence their principal deities (c.f. above, pp.238-240). Upper Saltpond consisting, as it does, of two divisions of the traditional State of Nkusukum, it contains two asafo companies which have been numbered - like the divisions they represent - No.1 and No.3. Each holds its Wɔtwandua festival separately. The following description refers specifically to the No.1 company festival:-

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[1] Christensen 1954a:33-34.

The annual festival of No.1 asafo company, Upper Saltpond.

(a) The silencing of the drums. The annual Wɔtwandua festival of No.1 asafo company was heralded as usual by the "Silencing of the Drums" on the most suitable Wednesday in mid-September. Like all other official announcements, the event was proclaimed by an asafo member circulating the town with a gong-gong. He instructed the townspeople that, for the ensuing two weeks, no drum, or other form of musical instrument, could be played, except by the asafo company itself. Women were forbidden to pound their fufu in the hours of darkness, and no funeral rites could be held[1,2]. Infringements were to incur a fine of ¢2-05 (£0-68; 1973).

(b) The tree-cutting. On the following Tuesday afternoon, the drums called the company to assemble near the asafo post for the actual tree-cutting. Many of the members wore cotton head-bands of red, the colour of No.1 company, tied around their foreheads. Under the direction of two of their so-called "majors" (supifo), who were in command for the occasion, the participants formed up for procession in three groups. The foremost was made up of the "juniors" of the company, about 50 small boys, none much older than 13, and some scarcely more than 8. Behind these marched the small group of "female captains" (asafoakyerɛfo), numbering some 10. Each one carried her whip, the sign of office. Then, leading the body of men, went the two asafo drummers, and the other musicians. These included the several gong-gong players, as well as the Bell-Bearer and Bugle-Bearer, with their respective guides. The Bell-Bearer was wearing his ceremonial raffia dress, and had the appearance of being in a state of dissociation. With this same group, also, was the Flag-Bearer, though on this occasion, for reasons which were not explained, he was without his flag. The body of company members, the so-called "seniors" (see Chap.4, p.113), then followed. Numbering some 50 or so, their ages ranged from their late teens to about 50. Taking up the rear was a small group of "majors" and "captains" (supifo and asafohemfo), together numbering not more than 10. The order being given, the company marched away to the beat of the drums, taking the northerly road out of Saltpond, through Kuranchikrom.

The traditional site for the wood-cutting is situated about 4 miles outside Saltpond, along the road to Afrengwa, a village belonging to the "traditional" Fante State of Abura. This road follows the course of the River Nkasaku, which, rising near Afrengwa, flows into the Atufa Lagoon, between the two Saltpond settlements. The terrain here is largely farmland, interspersed with several patches of scrub and trees. The asafo company,

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[1] Christensen (1954a:116) explains that the similar precautions which he noted during the equivalent period are "due to the proximity of the spirits". No Saltpond informants actually put forward this explanation, but many believed the gods to be more closely present at the time of the festivals.

[2] In particular cases, exceptions to certain of these rules can sometimes be made with the consent of the company; see, for instance, below p.265.

however, does not merely fell trees at the nearest convenient site; instead, it marches very nearly as far as Afrengwa itself, in order to reach a patch of brushwood which - though admittedly unusually dense - has an additional more particular significance.

Some asafo members assume that this lies in the aged tree, half-concealed within, which they take to be a nature-god (bosom). Others explain that the god, whom they name as Nana Nkasaku, does not live in the tree, but in the river. They point out, on the opposite side of the water-course, another tree, bedecked with lengths of navy and white calico, where, they say, a possession-priestess from Afrengwa observes the annual rites for this river-deity. And some also tell the tale that, every night, Nana Nkasaku comes out at the source of the river, and walks its length from Afrengwa to the lagoon, stopping to rest at various places along the route. These locations are marked in most cases by trees, which themselves define the sites for ritual, practised by priestesses from the Saltpond communities along the river path (pp.249-250).

> The annual festival of No.1 asafo company, Upper Saltpond. (b) The tree-cutting (continued). The actual wood-cutting was not witnessed directly by the writer, and therefore it was not learnt whether any specifically ritual acts, such as the offering of libations, took place at the tree-cutting site. Nor, indeed, could it be confirmed whether the elderly and delicate Ɔkɔmfo Anan, senior priestess of No.1 company, had herself partaken in the journey. When next encountered, the parade, having encircled Saltpond along the by-pass, was re-entering the town by the westerly road. Every member - man and boy, apart from the officers - carried a whole young tree, dancing with it enthusiastically to the beat of the drum. The Bell-Bearer was performing vigorous feats of athletics, a distant look in his eyes. Meanwhile, Ɔkɔmfo Anan was waiting inside the market beside the tree-residence of the tutelary deity, Nana Eku.
>
> On reaching the market, the company milled around in the street outside, singing and dancing to the drum-rhythms. As soon as all had collected together, the two "majors" ordered that the leading group, the "juniors", should go inside, carrying their young trees with them. At once, under the direction of the "captains" and "female captains", the exuberant small boys surged into the market-place, to be met by Ɔkɔmfo Anan, the priestess. With great gusto, they ran in a circle three times around the huge old fenced tree which provides the home of Nana Eku, tutelary deity of Upper Town. As they ran, their green saplings held high in the air, the priestess sprinkled them with "medicine", splashed by a bunch of leaves from a concrete pot situated at the foot of the

tree. This, it was explained, was to confer life and good fortune for the period between this festival and the next. Having encircled the deity, the boys were told, by one of the "captains", to leave their saplings in a heap beside the tree, after which they waited around, somewhat aimlessly.

Before long, a second group burst into the market, this time made up of some 20 young men, mostly in their twenties. This group comprised the younger rank of asafo "seniors" (c.f. Chap.4, p.113). The same procedure was adopted for these as for the "juniors". Their saplings were added to the same pile, the "captain" supervising them, to ensure that every tree was safely positioned.

Very shortly, the final group, the elder "seniors", came into the market, led by the drummers and other musicians. The drummers took up their station beside the deity; the Bell-Bearer danced nearby. As before, the group ran round and round the deity, each holding his tree aloft, being sprinkled, all the while, with medicine by Ɔkɔmfo Anan. Again, their trees were, at last, left in the growing pile.

For a few minutes more, the drums continued to play, while all present - asafo members, officers (male and female), and a certain number of unaffiliated onlookers - danced with their hands held high above their heads. The purpose of this, asafo members explained, was that Nana Eku could take away their sicknesses. Then, for a while, the priestess busied herself removing small portions of medicine-water for onlookers to wash in, adults first, and, after them, a vast number of small children. Soon, though, the drummers began to pack up, and participants and onlookers alike began to drift away. The proceedings for the day were now over.

The annual festival of No.1 asafo company (continued). (c) The fence-building. A much smaller group of company representatives re-assembled in the market-place the following morning, in order to complete the ceremonies. (Wednesday is regarded as the appropriate day for all forms of communication with the deity, Nana Eku.) Present on this occasion were about 5 each of the supifo, the asafohemfo and the asafoakyerɛfo (the "majors", "captains" and "female captains"). Also in evidence was the ɔbaatan, the "father" of the asafo. Ɔkɔmfo Anan, the senior possession-priestess of the company, was in attendance, and she was assisted by both the other priestesses attached to No.1 asafo. Mustered, as workers, were about a dozen ordinary members of the company, including the company Spokesman. One of the asafo drummers was also present, carrying the principal company drum, which he was required to play at every particularly meaningful stage of the event.

Beforehand, each of the asafo officers, whether they were to be present at the ceremonies or not, had been required to provide one bottle of "rum", for the fortification of the workers. The official Stool-Holders, too, following established custom, had each contributed an amount in accordance with their own wishes. The Chief and Queen Mother, it was explained, are never asked for a contribution, although it is open to them to make one voluntarily.

Most of the company officials had arrived promptly, and, while the rest of the participants were collecting together, they set about the preliminaries. Ɔkɔmfo Anan, the priestess, assisted by the company Spokesman and accompanied by the asafo

drummer, checked the level of the medicine which remained in the pot at the base of the tree-deity Nana Eku. Following this, the longest serving "major" (supi) of the company (who was the most senior officer present) poured a libation, and explained to the deity why the company had assembled. The procedure was then repeated for the other important pair of deities, Nana Kwankyiwa and Nana Batakali, who stand intertwined just outside the market-place.

By the time the foursome had re-entered the market, the asafo members had set to work. Under the direction of one of the younger of the "majors", they were taking down the old fence which had surrounded Nana Eku. This, now nothing more than dead wood to be disposed of later (but see below, p.254), was being replaced by the new young trees which the company had collected the day before. These they trimmed, but did not entirely strip of their living green leaves. Meanwhile, the two subordinate priestesses were helping by plaiting thin creepers, to make the strong twine used to bind the fence. The more elderly "majors" and the senior priestess sat at one side, chatting, and intermittently commenting upon the progress of the work.

Within a couple of hours, the new fence was beginning to take shape. Some 6 ft. in height, and so closely woven that neither man nor beast could enter, it neatly encircled the tree-deity by about 18 ins. in all directions. At the base of the fence, the men were constructing a tiny gate, no more than 12 ins. high. The concrete pot, used as a receptacle for medicines and libations alike, remained outside the fence.

Seeing that the work was nearing completion, Ɔkɔmfo Anan set out upon a tour of the market-women, summoning with her the company Spokesman to beat the gong-gong, and a small boy to carry an enamel bucket. Each tradeswoman is required to make an offering from her stock, or alternatively a contribution in cash. The priestess returned in due course with a varied collection of fish, plantain, cassava, tomatoes, garden-eggs, pepper and kenkey (fermented corn), as well as a pile of charcoal. She complained loudly, though, that one of the plantain-sellers had refused to give anything. The refusal was accepted, though bitterly; there was no apparent attempt to impose any sanctions in order to compel the woman to contribute.

Asafo members explain that the food is intended for Nana Eku, and that it should be suspended around the fence until the birds eat it, or it rots away. Some of it, though, they say, should be eaten by Ɔkɔmfo Anan, the priestess. On this occasion, the priestess's portion comprised very much the greater part, and was carried away by her small male helper. The food which remained was cut into small pieces by the junior priestesses, assisted by some of the asafo officers, who were still waiting nearby with very little else to do. The task was finished by about 1 p.m., at very much the same time as the fence itself. At this stage, individual participants had been drifting away to take their mid-day meal, the others continuing with the work in their absence.

By early afternoon, the food offerings were being tied to the upper binding of the new fence, from which they were allowed to hang free. The drum played all the while. Ɔkɔmfo Anan produced two lengths of calico: one white, which was

attached to the fence above the little gate; the second navy-blue, being draped upon the tree-deity itself. Some of the kenkey (fermented corn) which had been donated, having been mixed to a paste with water and palm-oil, was then daubed by the priestess around the rim of the medicine-pot, situated just outside the fence. She then completed her attentions for Nana Eku. Removing her shoes, she poured a libation of gin, some into the medicine-pot, and some upon the actual roots of the tree. While so doing, she again requested that the deity - and, through the deity, that "Almighty God" - should confer good fortune upon the town, and all persons present, for the coming year. The senior "major" of the company repeated her words after her, and the whole procedure was followed, all over again, at the rear of the tree, for another pair of deities, Atafo ("Twins"). The priestess then rinsed her arms, legs and face with liquid from the medicine-jar, taking some of the mixture into her mouth and spitting it into the tree. Finally, she sprinkled medicine from the jar over all the participants and onlookers nearby, and then moved away, accompanied by the rest of the party, to provide for the needs of the gods Kwankyiwa and Batakali outside.

Nana Kwankyiwa is regarded as the second most important nature-god of No.1 division; moreover, Okomfo Anan avows that he, of all the deities, is the one who "works hardest". His large tree, standing on impressive stilt-like roots, has grown totally entwined around that of Batakali, his "boy" or messenger, whom he is said to send to voice his requests. The pair have been encircled by a low concrete wall. The proceedings here were rather similar, but simpler. While the drummer sounded the asafo drum, Okomfo Anan poured the deities a libation, using, in this case, not gin, but Pepsi-Cola, since Kwankyiwa is believed not to like strong drink. She then rinsed her body with medicine, from the container outside the wall at the base of the tree. Afterwards, she splashed the mixture generously over everyone present. She also sprinkled a remaining portion of the mashed kenkey around the intertwined trees. Some asafo members now began to paint the wall surrounding the trees with whitewash, but, discovering that they had not brought enough of this to complete the job, it was decided to finish off the following day.

For this reason, too, the lengths of scarlet calico which had been brought along to clothe the deities were not immediately affixed.

(By the next day, the wall had been painted, inside and out, as, also, had been the medicine-pot. The two strips of calico had been hung, one to conceal a small opening in the wall, and the other upon the tree itself.)

The party therefore re-entered the market for the final part of the day's proceedings, namely, the offering of a hen to Nana Eku. By custom, this is carried out in a very particular way. The tiny gate in the fence around the deity is left open, but, if any hen finds its way through, the gate is snapped shut, trapping the bird within. This fowl then constitutes the sacrifice. Custom requires that it be slaughtered and divided without use of the knife, being, instead, torn limb from limb.

Everyone, accordingly, waited near the deity, watching the movements of the hens in the market-place, and making encouraging comments. A messenger arrived from the Upper Town Chief, asking

whether the ceremonies had been completed; he, too, joined the expectant gathering. Before very long a hen was duly trapped and was carried off, protesting loudly, but before its life had been terminated, an appeal was made by its owner on the grounds that it had young. Ɔkɔmfo Anan listened sympathetically, and the hen was reprieved. The remaining company members settled down to await a second hen, which this time was long in coming.

The climax to the day's events was not witnessed by the writer directly, but company members reported later that, in the early evening, they trapped two more hens. These were slaughtered in the customary manner. As one of the company "majors" explained, with perhaps a tinge of relief:-

> "We don't have to buy fowls. It never fails every year. It is the power of the god which draws them."

The successful trapping of a hen is taken as a sign that the deity has accepted their offerings, and will grant their requests, for the coming year.

The annual festival of No.1 asafo company (continued).

(d) The opening of the drums. The Opening of the Drums was proclaimed on the Wednesday following the refurbishing of the fences around the gods Eku and Kwankyiwa. It was announced in the usual manner, by an asafo member beating the gong-gong through the town. This brought to a close the fortnight of ritual prohibitions (see p.244). Now, drums could again be played freely, and funeral rites be observed.

The preceding account of the "Tree-Cutting" festival of No.1 asafo company has shown how, annually, the principal deities Eku and Kwankyiwa are (notionally) housed, clothed, and sustained with food and drink. The other Saltpond asafo groups observe equivalent ritual for their own gods. No.3 company, based in Eguabadu, Upper Saltpond, cuts its own fencing wood at the same location, near Afrengwa, as No.1 company, but the Lower Saltpond (No.2) company makes use of a different site within Low Town territory.

Also during this festival period, the various other deities in the area should be provided for. Reports were received, for instance (though these were not confirmed from any unquestionably authoritative source), describing the annual rituals observed for Nana Nkasaku. He, the river-deity, is said to be important, since he provides the water supply for the whole town. By accounts such as these, offerings of ɔtɔ (yam mashed with egg) are sprinkled along the length of the river. The priestess from neighbouring Afrengwa is said, by these informants, to deal with the reach between the source of the river and the so-called "resting-place of Nkasaku" on the outskirts of

Saltpond. The senior priestess of No.3 company, in Saltpond itself, is said to cover the next stretch, and the No.1 company priestess to take over from there (the actual dividing point was never clearly defined) up to the lagoon. Priestesses from Low Town, as they themselves confirmed, sprinkle ɔtɔ yearly into the lagoon for Nana Atufa, and on to the sea for Nana Bosompo, the sea-deity.

Lesser deities in and around the town should also receive their regular yearly attention, though they are treated with far less ceremoniousness. They are usually "fed" and "clothed", but not fenced. In many cases, apparently, the rituals are performed by their respective possession-priestesses acting alone, although the senior priestess of No.1 company usually has the assistance of the company Spokesman. It is not unknown for these lesser gods to be neglected, possibly for several years, either because of their unimportance, or the inaccessibility of their sites, or, perhaps, for no other reason than complacency. This, though, can have consequences which may bring these gods back into prominence (see below, pp.279-281).

After the asafo companies' own festivals (the "Tree-Cutting" ceremonies, now complete but for their rather private concluding ritual; see pp.254-255), there follows the climax of the whole cycle, the Town Festival itself. This is usually referred to in Saltpond, by both communities, as the Ayer[1]. Though largely again the province of the asafo companies, it is intended that the Festival should involve the whole community. This juxtaposition is not unreasonable; after all, local ideology asserts strongly that "the asafo is the town" (see Chap.4, p.112). The Festival is regarded as so important, that many townspeople, who have moved away for reasons of work or marriage, make a special effort to return home at this time of year, either to take part, or even merely to look on.

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[1] It is described briefly by Christensen (1954a:116) under the title of akyeremaadze.

However, in Upper Saltpond in the year of this research, the Town Festival was not held. The reason officially given for the omission was that both the Chief and Queen Mother were in mourning, she for her own mother and he for his predecessor. The Queen Mother, it was said, was still living in seclusion in her own house, and although the Chief had, for the sake of convenience, been granted dispensation to take part in ordinary social activities, his participation in public merrymaking would not be appropriate. (As will be made clear in due course, pp.284-285, there were at the time further reasons for abandoning the Upper Town Festival, which could have been at least as pressing.) The cancellation, unfortunately, has the consequence that informants' descriptions of the Festival, not wholly consistent one with another, could not be checked by observation. The following paragraphs offer as clear an impression of the proceedings as could be obtained in the circumstances.

The Town Festival is held on a particular Saturday following the "Tree-Cutting" ceremony. Not even asafo officers, however, appeared able to agree as to which special Saturday this should be. Some made out that the festival should occur while the drums remain "closed"; others affirmed, as would seem more likely[1], that it is held on the first Saturday after the drums are opened on the Wednesday. Some informants say that, on the Thursday before the Festival, the various ranks of the asafo company parade through the town in full ceremonial dress. By these accounts, the company re-assembles in ceremonial costume on the Friday, apparently to "play asafo", that is, to drum and to dance. On the Saturday itself, the asafo company, again in full dress, should parade the streets of the town, together with the official Stool-Holders in all their regalia; the Chief and Queen Mother likewise join the procession, carried shoulder-high in their palanquins. Having paraded the town, the procession ends at an open space, where the company should again "play asafo", and the Chief and

[1] c.f. Christensen 1954a:116.

Stool-Holders should dance. This, indeed, was the approximate pattern of the Low Town Festival, which - supposed always to take place shortly after the festival in Upper Town - was held, as usual, in 1973.

Habitual participants or onlookers at these events sometimes give an impression, especially if they are active Christians, that the Ayer Festivals are essentially secular in significance. This is denied by more candid informants, who point out that drumming and dancing have in themselves a ritual meaning. A religious significance was clearly evident at the Low Town Festival, when one of the more important of the items of regalia carried on display was the Ɔtsɛguan drum, which is revered as a deity (p.237). The possession-priestesses attached to No.2 asafo company took part in the proceedings, wearing their ceremonial raffia dress, and the afternoon's events concluded with a libation, poured by the Low Town Chief at the company-post.

The lack of agreement among Upper Saltpond informants was particularly evident in connection with the role in the Upper Town Festival of No.3 asafo company. Everybody accepted that, "traditionally", it should hold a "Tree-Cutting" (Wɔtwandua) ceremony of its own. However, No.3 company members maintained that they also customarily observe the Ayer, or Town Festival, apart from the other group. During the Ayer, they say, they form up in full dress to parade the streets of Eguabadu and Kuranchikrom, in the territory of the Sub-Chief (ɔdzekurow) to whom they owe allegiance (Chap.4, pp.102,106). By their account, No.1 company holds its parade on the Friday and No.3 company follows on the Saturday; they tend, though, not to commit themselves on the subject of whether the two companies parade the very same streets. This version is vehemently denied by members of No.1 company itself, who point out that their own titular head is a full Chief (ɔhen), whose authority covers the whole of Upper Saltpond. These latter informants claim that it is they, themselves, who organise the one and only Town Festival, and that their parades take in Eguabadu

and Kuranchikrom, along with the rest of the town.(This much was confirmed on a different occasion; see pp.273-274.) No.3 company, they say, is required to accompany them.

Members of No.1 asafo company often go on to say that No.3 company is now moribund. It may, indeed, be the case that No.3 company is less active than the other two asafo groups in Saltpond; certainly, it was not found possible, during the research, to make meaningful contact with its leaders, or to view the company in action. Moreover, the company showed no urgency in observing even its "Tree-Cutting" Festival, although the fence around Nana Osenaman, its principal deity, was seen by the writer to have been rebuilt, some near 3 months behind the customary date.

No.3 company members explained their own omission of the Ayer, or Town Festival, by reference, again, to the large number of funerals pending in the town. The fact of these is indisputable, but it cannot escape notice that, had the Upper Saltpond Festival or Festivals been held, the confrontation between two factions of such opposing views could have been difficult to resolve. This problem tended to be brushed aside by No.1 company informants who, though sometimes admitting that the Sub-Chief in Eguabadu was currently campaigning to be made a full Chief (see above, p.102; below, pp.278-279), alleged that his asafo company would have no choice but to follow their own view of the matter. Maybe this would have been so, although the option of failing to take part in a traditional ritual is well recognised. For instance, it was widely accepted, within No.1 division itself, that one of its own factions - that which had recently supported an alternative candidate for the Chiefship (see Chap.4, pp.105-106; also below, p. 283) - was refusing its support for the Town Festival.

Quite apart, then, from the multiplicity of funerals, there were various reasons why, in 1973, the holding of the Upper Saltpond Festival would have been inexpedient. This will become even more apparent when the connotations of territoriality, implicit in asafo activities and nature-god

beliefs, are discussed (see below, Section 5, pp.277-281, and especially, pp.278-279). The relevance of the asafo rituals to the concerns of any incumbent, or aspirant, Chief will then be easily recognised. Subsequent to that discussion, a following section of this chapter (Section 6, pp.282-285) will consider, at greater depth, the manner in which "traditional" rituals are deliberately manipulated in the pursuit of political ambitions.

After the Town Festival, if it is to be held, there remains, of the cycle, only one more set of events, namely, the bonfires which are lit privately by the separate asafo companies. Christensen, incidentally, mentions the asafo bonfires as immediately preceding the two days of parade, which would here be referred to as the Town Festival[1]. He ascribes no special meaning to these fires. However, the No.1 company bonfire, which was witnessed by the writer, took place more than a fortnight after the proper date for the Town Festival, and had a particular significance:-

> The annual festival of No.1 asafo company (continued).
> (e) The bonfire. No.1 asafo company lit its bonfire in the evening of the third Wednesday after the building of the new fence around Nana Eku, the tutelary deity who stands in the market-place. Darkness had fallen, and the market long been closed; nobody was present except members of the company and the writer. The purpose of the fire was to burn the wood which had made up the old fence around the god. This, for the previous 3 weeks, had stood where it had been left, in a pile beside the tree-deity.
>
> A small quorum of the company was present on this occasion. The ɔbaatan (the "father" of the company) was there, together with the senior or longest-serving supi ("major"), and the priestess Ɔkɔmfo Anan. Some 5 of the "female captains" (asafoakyerɛfo) had arrived, and about a dozen ordinary members.
>
> Before the work began, a libation was poured to Nana Eku by the priestess, with the assistance of the senior "major". Then, under the "major's" direction, the asafo members moved the old dead wood to a safe position, at one side of the market-place, and set it alight. Before long, it was burning fiercely.
>
> When the flames were at their very highest, some of the more reckless of the members, elated, if not indeed intoxicated, by the evening's events, began to indulge in feats of daring. Some made wild leaps over the fire; others jumped through the flames themselves. One tripped, seeming to burn himself, but allowed himself no sign of pain.
>
> Soon, though, the flames began to subside. Seeing this, the company Spokesman, who was present, took up his gong-gong, and played it while he walked across the market to the god, Nana Eku. Beating all the time, he encircled the deity, and returned.

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[1] Christensen 1954a:116.

> Finally, the senior "major" ordered the men to spread the growing pile of ash out over a wide circle, in order to cool. The fire had, by now, nearly exhausted itself, and it was safe for the party to disperse. The proceedings were not yet over, however, and it was arranged to re-assemble at dawn.
>
> On returning the following morning, the asafo members neatly scraped up the ashes from the dead fire, and carried them to the priestess's house. These, it was explained, would be made into an exceptionally powerful medicine (edur), which would cure sickness, or bring death upon anyone who wished the user harm. Ɔkɔmfo Anan, assisted by the senior "major", then poured a final libation to Nana Eku, to tell the deity they had finished, after which everyone left to go about the day's business.
>
> The priestess spent the following day grinding her store of ash into a fine powder, which she afterwards made available to her clients in return for a fee in the order of ₵1 (£0-67; 1973).

This event was the last of the rituals in the Festival cycle. The asafo "Tree-Cutting" ceremony, which it concluded, can in a sense be regarded as bearing the same relation to the Town Festival, as a limited Stool Festival bears to its extended version (pp.242-243), or, indeed, the private festival of a possession-priestess to her public festival (see Chap.7, pp.228-231). As Mr. Mansen, himself a "major" (supi) in No.1 asafo company as well as an active Methodist, once explained:-

> "The Town Festival can be postponed, but it is absolutely necessary to fence Nana Eku every year. If you did not fence him, you would leave him naked, and there would be sickness and trouble."

What is felt to be essential, even by many Christians, is that the basic rituals be observed; the public dance and festivity is an optional extra. And Mr. Mansen concluded:-

> "When the ceremonies in the market have been completed, the gods can be left alone until next year."

3. The Churches' Attitude to the Asafo. The opening passages of this chapter have made clear the fundamental place of "traditional" belief and ritual among the concerns of the asafo companies today. The companies themselves, as described earlier (Chap.4, pp.121-123), have "traditionally" comprised an integral component in the political organisation of their respective communities. And, just as the ritual significance of asafo survives into the 1970s, so, too, if in an attenuated form, has political activity within the "traditional" sphere continued (see Chap.4, pp.124-129). The previous section has indicated - and others to follow will confirm - that there exists an intimate connection between the political and the religious aspects of asafo. In view, therefore, of the increasing hold which Christianity has been winning over the local population, an obvious dilemma confronts many potential asafo members and leaders. It will consequently be worthwhile to examine the attitude taken by the Christian churches towards the asafo companies, and the manner in which the townsmen have responded.

The ritual implications of asafo were clearly not lost upon even the earliest of the missionaries in the Fante area, although published sources make little mention of the companies as such. Rather, they speak of the Methodists' opposition to so-called "fetishism"[1]. This, in the context of political organisation, covers activies such as drumming and dancing, and participation in "traditional" State Festivals[2], all of which, as shown previously, figure prominently among the asafo companies' concerns. The attitude of the missionaries on these questions was, apparently, becoming widely known to the Fante people by the middle of the 19th century[3]. It is hardly surprising that the first local opposition to Christianity, which reached its climax with the affair of the nananom pɔw in 1851 (Chap.5, pp.135-136), is reported to have been instigated by the priests of "traditional" deities,

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[1] Williamson 1967:54
[2] Christiansen 1959:268-269; Parsons 1963:29-31
[3] Bartels 1965:53-54.

together with the "captains" of the asafo companies[1]. To these same companies, of course, the priests themselves would have been attached.

The events of 1851, which discredited the extensively significant cult of the nananom pɔw, left, still extant, the cults of local significance managed by the asafo companies and their priests. Christians, apparently, were expected to renounce all activities in this connection, and the prohibition was expressed as vehemently, if not more so, in Saltpond as elsewhere. It has already been mentioned (Chap.5, pp.137-138) how, in 1890, according to local sources, the Christians of Lower Saltpond were provoked into abandoning their Methodist allegiance, in favour of the Catholic Church:

> "through the arrogance of Rev. Freeman of the Wesleyan Mission for cursing the townsmen for their lack of faith by playing asafo on Sundays."

The Catholic fathers were presumably more tolerant in these matters. No other church came upon the Saltpond scene before the start of the 20th century.

As the new century progressed, there arose, alongside a developing national consciousness, a renewed pride in indigenous institutions. The process of Africanisation, within the ministry of some, at least, of the churches - notably the Methodist - neared completion. Ghanaian Christians no longer felt prepared to adopt attitudes of wholesale condemnation of their entire culture, such as had been disseminated by 19th century missionaries[2]. Increasingly, now, the churches in Ghana were encountering criticism, on the grounds that their activity undermined the "traditional", and supposedly stable, order of society[3]. The views of Chiefs were also increasingly heard, often complaining that Christians, by failing to participate in "traditional" ceremonies, were avoiding the duty to declare and maintain their customary allegiances[4]. Christians were even, in some

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[1] Bartels 1965:54.
[2] Parsons 1963:28,45; Bartels 1965:124,141-143.
[3] c.f. Kimble 1963:154; Parsons 1963:29; Williamson 1967:55-58.
[4] Busia 1951:133-138; Parsons 1963:30; Williamson 1967:149-152.

areas, accused of failing to observe "traditional" duties to the State which were purely secular in character, such as the undertaking of communal labour projects[1].

The later generations of church leaders proved more receptive to such views, and, before the middle of the 20th century, a dialogue was well under way. The new attitude of the churches was to look at indigenous custom, with the aim of determining which aspects within it were fully compatible with Christianity[2]. By 1936, the Methodist Church was urging its members to observe their customary service to their Chief, wherever there was no such conflict. There were suggestions, too, of a greater leniency on the subject of State Festivals, for it was left for conscience to decide whether or not participation was "repugnant"[3]. Other churches, elsewhere in the country, were becoming concerned with the same issues. There was, for instance, a searching debate in the 1940s between "traditional" authorities in Akyem (Eastern Region) and the Presbyterian Church, but no real agreement was reached[4]. Similar discussions continued into the 1950s, both within churches, and between them at the forum of the Christian Council. Again, these led to no very definite conclusions[5]. This, perhaps, is hardly surprising; as K.A. Busia - a most perceptive observer of the cultural scene - had commented beforehand, the religious and secular aspects of Akan chiefship and political organisation are not easily extricable[6].

More recent or more precise information on these questions was not available from the churches at national level, in 1973. Nor, in Saltpond, would Establishment Church ministers put forward any opinion on the subject, beyond a general condemnation of "fetish". Nevertheless, the townspeople, particularly those who are church members, have a clear idea of their own as to what the different churches do, or do not, allow. As townsmen say,

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[1] Busia 1951:137-138.
[2] Parsons 1963:29; Kimble 1963:156.
[3] Parsons 1963:79.
[4] Parsons 1963:30,87-89; Williamson 1967:149-152.
[5] Parsons 1963:92-95; Williamson 1967:157-158.
[6] Busia 1951:36-39; 1954:208.

there has arisen a compromise. Thus, the ritual aspect of asafo is now treated as if separable from the political and social aspects[1], and there is no rule to debar any Establishment Church member from merely assuming membership, or office, in the company. A significant proportion of men participate in both church and asafo affairs. These, however, have to accept that they must be seen to keep themselves at a discreet distance from those asafo activities which carry an overt ritual significance. The obvious occasion for circumspection of this nature is the annual festival.

The following examples show how particular individuals in No.1 company have made their choice between the demands of church and asafo. In the first two cases, however, the decision is straightforward:-

> Case 27. Kwame Cooper. Kwame Cooper, a man in his 40s belonging to the upper grade of asafo "seniors" (c.f. Chap.4, p.113), holds the position of Spokesman (ɔkyeame) of No.1 company. This means that he is authorised to speak, on formal occasions, on behalf of his fellows of ordinary rank in the company. He has received no schooling, and has no regular full-time employment. Nowadays he lives largely upon the retainer, which he receives from the Upper Town Chief, in return for helping to maintain a watch over Nana Eku, the tutelary deity of the community. He it is, too, who is usually sent to beat the gong-gong around the town, proclaiming any announcements from the Chief to the people.
>
> Kwame Cooper is frankly animist in belief. He is invariably present at asafo activities, acting as assistant to the priestess on ritual occasions.

Some asafo officers have adopted the same position, as, for instance, Supi Kwakye:-

> Case 28. Supi Kwakye. Supi Kwakye claims to be the "senior" of the "majors" of No.1 asafo company, for, he explains, he assumed his position nearly 40 years ago, earlier than any of his present colleagues. Upon the insistence of the company, he says, he followed his mother's brother in the office. Now aged 66, he supports himself by means of a variety of business interests. In his childhood, he received some few years of elementary education, but he has not become a member of any Christian church. In declining so to do, he resembles his own father, and, indeed, his patrilateral half-sister, Ɔkɔmfo Anan, who is the senior possession-priestess attached to his own asafo company.
>
> Supi Kwakye is almost invariably present at every asafo

[1] c.f. also Christensen 1959:270.

event, taking always a prominent part. On most ritual occasions, he shares responsibility with the asafo priestess for conducting any necessary rites (e.g. see pp.247,270,273). Usually it is he who, together with the priestess, pours libations for the company deities.

However, among high-ranking members, a more typical balance between asafo and church ties is displayed by Supi Mansen.

Case 29. Supi Mansen. The life history of Mr. Mansen, a successful Upper Saltpond trader aged 63, has been given in Chapter 6 (Case 7, p.180). It need only be added, here, that Mr. Mansen combines his position as a leading member of the Methodist Church, with active participation in the affairs of No.1 asafo company, under the rank of "major" (supi). In terms of years of service, he is the second in seniority at this level. He claims that he did not succeed any kinsman in the office, but that it was created for him, specifically, in recognition of his own merits. This followed his return from military service overseas, during the 1939-45 War, with, apparently, a highly creditable record. His own title, he says, was given in addition to the title of "captain" (safohen), customarily bestowed in his matrilineage, as in all the "Stool-Holding" kin groups of No.1 division (c.f. above, Chap.3, pp.79-80; Chap.4, p.115). The lineage "captaincy", he explains, was already occupied by his mother's brother. It was largely in order to play the part in the company, which his new position required, that Mr. Mansen made the previously mentioned change in his place of residence, from Sekondi to Saltpond. Supi Mansen's commanding personality - developed, no doubt, by his earlier experience as Sergeant Major - had won for him, in 1973, a position of exceptional influence among the asafo officers.

In 1973, Supi Mansen's voice in the deliberations of the asafo elders appeared to be regarded as indispensable. He attended most asafo activities, although, at times, business commitments would bring about his absence. He was not present, for instance, during the major part of the annual festival conducted in the market-place for the tutelary deity Nana Eku. This was despite his avowal to the god's power, and his insistence as to the necessity of observing the rites (see above, p.255; also Chap.7, p.223). Nevertheless, his expressions of interest in the proceedings were intense, and he joined the gathering in its final stages, when most onlookers, and even some participants, had drifted away. But publicly, at least, he took no part in asafo events which were specifically ritual by nature.

This is the stance adopted by most of the asafo officers, among whom number some of the leading members of both the Methodist and Catholic churches.

The churches wield one especially powerful sanction to control the behaviour of their own adherents, for it is open to them, at the last, to refuse a Christian funeral to any who have infringed regulations. This

intimation has powerful effect. Within this culture, in which death is traditionally accompanied by elaborate ritual - much of it signifying the deceased's position in life - , the church burial has come to be regarded as the most prestigious form of funeral ceremony.

Nevertheless, the funeral rites which can be accorded by the asafo company itself (c.f. pp.261-271), are also a source of intense personal satisfaction to many company members. But these, too, present a problem, since, like the annual festival - and for the same reason of their pagan connotations - , they do not meet with the approval of the churches. It is here, though, that the churches' positions vary. The Methodist Church is known to refuse, outright, to bury any ordinary asafo member, if the company has "played" to mark his death. The A.M.E. Zion Church, on the other hand, which is regarded by the townspeople as more indulgent on most issues, is understood to impose no restrictions. The Catholic Church, likewise, is regarded as inexacting over this matter. No judgement of the attitude of the Anglican Church was offered by informants from No.1 company, none of them belonging to that body.

It should be noted that, in practice, church restrictions against participation in asafo ritual bear more heavily upon the leaders of the companies, than upon the members. This is because regularly participating asafo members, of ordinary rank, are overwhelmingly, like Kwame Cooper (Case 27, p.259), men of little or no education, and low "class" status. Thus, they are unlikely to be active church members anyway. They, therefore, rest secure in the certainty of an asafo funeral in the future. Asafo officers, on the other hand, are, as Chapter 4 has shown (p.116), explicitly men of a certain standing in the community, men who belong to the very "social class" in which church membership has become almost habitual[1]. Those among them who are Methodist in persuasion would be faced with the prospect of forgoing the rites which they deserve from the asafo company

[1]This feature is also noted of the coastal Fante settlements by Christensen (1954a:123).

after their death, were it not for a further understanding which has apparently been reached within their church. This allows that any church member, who warrants a so-called "State Funeral", may be given the "traditional-style" rites of the asafo company, and grants that he cannot afterwards be refused a church burial. The concession applies to office-holders of the division (the "State"), that is, to the Chief and to asafo officers. No such funeral was held under the auspices of the Methodist Church during the field period, and therefore arrangements made in practice were not confirmed. A funeral of this kind, did, however, occur with the accompaniment of a Catholic burial. On this latter occasion it was observed, by the writer, that the asafo rites were performed, though with certain compromise (see below pp.265-271, and especially pp.267-268).

Within Pentecostal and African churches in Saltpond, the question of asafo participation tends to present a less urgent problem. This is not because these groups are especially accommodating over the subject; on the contrary, some are notably strict. The Pentecostals, with their Fundamentalist leanings, are typically stringent upon all expressions of "fetishism". The African churches, too, as noted in the previous chapter (p.219), are repeated and vehement in their censure. The Musama Disco Christo Church, in particular, specifically rules in its written constitution against attendance at "fetish dances and customs"[1]. This regulation, when first propounded in the early days of the church, was understood to cover both town festivals, and asafo activities generally[2]. Observance of it, by converts, brought about conflict with Chiefs and asafo companies in the area where the church was then represented[3], but this area did not at the time extend to Saltpond. During the research, nobody was encountered within this church who claimed to be, or was otherwise identified as, an active participant with an asafo company. It is perhaps relevant to note, here, that the M.D.C.C. draws most of its

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[1] Jehu-Appiah 1959:37.
[2] Baeta 1962:36.
[3] Baeta 1962:36; Jehu-Appiah 1959:7.

membership from Kuranchikrom, the territory of No.3 company, the weakest of all the Saltpond asafo groups. Moreover, many of its male members are of immigrant origin, and have no connection with the Saltpond companies. This feature is equally characteristic of certain other churches of this type in Saltpond (see Chap.6, p.205).

The ministers of all the African churches, if asked, express a similar opposition to asafo companies, yet perhaps only one among them encounters the companies in any immediate sense. He, the Prophet of the Twelve Apostles in Low Town, leads a church which is particularly firmly grounded in the local population. He is, himself, a native of Lower Saltpond, and takes a prominent part in the affairs of his community. The (No.2) asafo company, there, is particularly vigorous, and asafo gatherings - notably funerals - occur frequently. The Prophet, who, through social obligation, must often attend such events, nevertheless maintains a discreet distance from the asafo participants themselves. Not all his church members, however, do likewise, and one of his regular male musicians doubles also as an asafo drummer. Further enquiry within other African churches might, perhaps, have brought to light similar cases elsewhere, although the Twelve Apostles' Church is, in fact, almost unique in having even a handful of male members, native Saltpond-born or otherwise (c.f. Chap.6, pp.200-203). It is, perhaps, because of the near non-representation of men, within the African churches, that the question of asafo participation rarely becomes a live issue. Conversely, though, this may be a factor contributing to the men's abstention.

The above discussion has shown that, when confronted with the opposing principles embodied in church and asafo company, some individuals make a straight choice in favour of either one or the other. A significant proportion, however, settle for a middle course of action, aiming to effect compromises with both institutions. Further cases of this kind will emerge in the following section, concerned with asafo "rites of passage".

4."Rites of Passage" in Asafo Ritual. For the asafo companies, "rites of passage" play a rather less important part than they have done within certain other men's associations of West Africa. Although every Fante male, according to local ideology, is eligible for membership in one company or another (c.f. Chap.4, p.112), these groups have never acquired the functions of men's initiation societies on the model, for instance, of the Sierra Leonean Poro associations[1]. Initiation rites for the asafo are minimal; in Saltpond, boys of the appropriate age (about 8 years) merely join in with the proceedings of the annual festival, and take part in other activities, thereafter, if they remain sufficiently interested. They receive no formal training, either at this time, or later.

Entry to the asafo, then, is marked by little or no ceremony. Departure from the company, however, is another matter. This leave-taking, which can only occur at a member's death, should be acknowledged by the company meeting to drum and dance outside the dead man's house[2]. This should, ideally, happen on the actual day of his burial. The company is previously responsible for bringing the corpse from the place where the death occurred, back to the house (usually a lineage-owned house) where the obsequies are to be held. Formerly, the corpse would have been carried on foot in ceremonial fashion, with interchanges of drum-greetings between the asafo company and others whose territory it might cross along the route (see p.278). Nowadays, however, the corpse is usually transported by lorry, and, in these circumstances, the ceremonial greetings can be omitted. When the burial itself takes place, - assuming, that is, that there is to be no church funeral service (c.f. above, pp.260-261) - the company is again responsible for carrying the coffin to the cemetery, although the actual interment is effected by the dead man's matrilineage.

In Lower Saltpond, during the 12 months of field research, asafo funerals took place regularly, and followed the above pattern. In Upper Town, on the

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[1] Little 1951:118-126; 243-245.
[2] c.f. Christensen 1954a:115-116.

other hand, they were rare, relative to the frequent occurrence of church burials. From time to time, No.1 asafo company travelled to "play" at, or after, the funerals of members whose matrilineages were located in other towns. Asafo members also very occasionally reported that they had buried one of their number locally, but the only asafo funeral which was actually witnessed by the writer took place following the death of one of No.1 company's officers, a man holding the rank of "major" (supi). In this instance, the asafo rites reputedly involved a more elaborate form of ceremonial which, asafo officers alleged, is performed only for those holding the rank of "captain" upwards (safohen; or - female - asafoakyerɛ). The only additional beneficiary, apparently, is the titular head of the company, the Chief (ɔhen) himself.

The above-mentioned funeral attracted the eager attention of the company. It is of particular interest here, not only because the dead man himself had been an active Christian (c.f. above, pp.259-263), but also because the event, as such, provided the company with its opportunity for selecting a successor. Its funerary observances merged almost imperceptibly with its rites for the installation of the new incumbent. This will become apparent from the following account.

> The funeral of Supi Blankson. Mr. Blankson was both a prominent member of the Saltpond Catholic Church, and an officer of No.1 asafo company, holding the rank of "major" (supi). His death took place during the period of the Upper Town festivals, while the drums remained "closed" (c.f. above, p.244). In spite of the general prohibition on funeral rites in force at that time, the company wished the burial to be marked by all the rites befitting the dead man's position. It therefore arranged to offer a special libation to Nana Eku, the tutelary deity, in order to secure her favour upon the event. According to officers' reports, the libation was presented immediately before the company assembled to bear the dead man from the hospital mortuary to the house of his matrilineage.
>
> Normally, members claimed, the company would have proceeded en masse to "play asafo" outside the hospital itself. On this occasion, however, they had apparently been requested to maintain silence in the vicinity, for the sake of the patients, and, therefore, only the four members appointed as corpse-bearers accompanied the asafo officers into the hospital grounds. Four of the "majors" had turned out to take command of the proceedings, including both

Supi Kwakye and Supi Mansen (c.f. above: Case 28, p.259; Case 29, p.260). Six of the "captains" (asafohemfo) were also present. The rest of the company were left waiting at the bottom of the hill on which, just inside Low Town territory, the hospital stands. About 30 of the ordinary members were on parade, some wearing the "traditional" Akan rust-coloured mourning cloth. (Virtually all the officers were similarly attired.) Ten or so of the "female captains" (asafoakyerefo) were present, the red head-band of the company tied around the foreheads. The women had divided themselves into two groups, some half joining the party which was to receive the supi's body, the rest staying behind to oversee the company. With these latter, was Okomfo Anan, the company priestess, who reportedly had just performed the necessary libation to Nana Eku. The company's Bugle-Bearer had, likewise, remained at the foot of the hill, as had the asafo drummers, who were engaging the attention of the waiting members with their play.

On arrival at the hospital, Supi Mansen and the corpse-bearers entered the mortuary to collect the body, the other officers remaining quietly outside. Shortly, the body was brought out on a stretcher, wrapped in one of the very costly Akan cloths of kente pattern, formed from silk strips woven in vivid "traditional" designs. The officers fell in around the corpse, and the cortege made its way out of the hospital grounds.

As soon as the stretcher-party could be seen breasting the hill by those waiting below, the Bugle-Bearer of the company sounded the notes of the Last Post in honour of the departed comrade:

"We are an army," explained Supi Mansen.

Then, as the corpse drew nearer to the assembled company, it was hailed by the waiting women. The company now grouped itself in formal procession around the stretcher, the drummers leading the way. The body of the dead supi was brought along behind, attended by the "female captains", who fanned him for his comfort with their cloths, as he went. The men of the company followed next, and the asafo officers, "majors" and "captains", took up the rear.

As they set off towards the dead supi's lineage house, the company broke into asafo mourning songs, lamenting that "A strong tree has fallen" and "We gave you a present but you did not say thank you". However, the crossing of the bridge over the Nkasaku River was made in complete silence, for this, it was said, is the custom. Immediately afterwards, the drumming and singing resumed. The procession moved in an orderly and deliberate manner, and at certain points it was halted while the drumming continued in acknowledgement of nature-deities (abosom) with residences along the route. One such stop took place at the end of the short lane leading to the "company post", in order to allow the drummer to fall out to play beside the structure itself. Again the procession moved off, now along the main road leading westwards out of town, and the company's officers were kept busy, supervising the marchers on to one side of the street, and directing the traffic into single file. The same chain of command was apparent as before; authority for routine eventualities was delegated to the younger "majors", but, in exceptional circumstances, special orders were issued by their seniors, being usually communicated to the men, not directly, but through the subordinate officers.

> Before long the procession had covered the short distance to the house, and came to a halt. The asafo officers fell out to take up their station outside the house, and the drummers were then ordered to beat the drums at the door. Upon this, a representative of the lineage emerged, and greeted each of the "majors" individually. The dead supi was brought up to the door, but the officers insisted that he could not be handed over before the company had "honoured" him. Consequently, the drums were sounded, the bugle was played, and the corpse was raised, in its stretcher, high into the air by the bearers, and made to "dance". This was done three times over. Then, finally, the corpse was carried into the house, to be given into the custody of the matrilineage, and the asafo members dispersed.

Subsequently, matrilineage members took the corpse tothe dead man's own privately-owned house opposite, to be laid out in the style suitable for the sight of visiting sympathisers. They then kept wake for him during the ensuing night. The "lying in state" continued, as is usual, throughout the following morning. The surviving asafo "majors" claimed that, at its conclusion, they would enter the house in order to observe certain rites beside the corpse. The "senior" among them, Supi Kwakye, would, they explained, pour a libation to the spirit of their dead colleague, announcing that he had now departed from them as a supi, and that the asafo company now separated itself from him as a brother. Thereafter, according to these asafo officers, the matrilineage could be permitted to put the corpse into its coffin for burial. Whether this ritual was actually carried out was never confirmed.

A further asafo ritual had been planned, which, unquestionably, was abandoned. Since the previous evening, when they had carried the dead man to the house of his lineage kin, the asafo officers had been declaring an intention to carry the coffin, on its way to the church funeral service, first to the "company post", in order to observe what they termed the "customary rites". The lineage, however, had, from the start, demurred at this suggestion, sending first to "beg" the company to forgo this part of the proceedings, and finally communicating their outright refusal. The asafo company, being in no mind to accept this outcome as inevitable, made plans to seize the coffin by force on its passage to the church, and then to march with it to the company post. At the very last moment, however, a

settlement was reached, the asafo company agreeing to accept 3 large bottles of gin, in return for omitting the "customary rites". This was the position when the company gathered to "play" outside the lineage house on the Saturday afternoon of the burial.

> The funeral of Supi Blankson (continued), and the installation of his successor. No.1 asafo company reassembled on the afternoon of the church funeral service, to "play asafo" for its departed officer. It was represented in some strength, some 60 of the men being present, with, in addition, 20 or so of the officers. These latter included the Tufohen, the company "general", and the Obaatan, the "father" of the company, as well as the same 4 "majors" (supifo) who had turned out on the previous afternoon. The other officers were "captains", men slightly outnumbered by women.
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> The company had taken up its station outside the house of the dead supi's matrilineage, and had been drumming for perhaps two hours before the funeral service was to begin. Every now and then, they would break into song, and one by one the members came forward to dance. Of these, the company Bell-Bearer, dressed in his ceremonial raffia costume and accompanied by his two guides, performed the most vigorously and the most repeatedly. Another to dance was the company Flag-Bearer, although he neither carried the company flag, nor wore his ceremonial dress. Two of the "female captains" (asafoakyerefo) took their own turn, these dancing more quietly and sedately than the men. Sudden incidents were caused by two outsiders, who, at one time or another, thrust their way through the ranks of the company and took up the dance. They both explained, however, that, being members of asafo companies elsewhere, they had found the call of the drum irresistible, and they were treated with amused indulgence. A further altercation erupted shortly afterwards, when one of the company's own members was hustled away by his fellows, for performing his dance with his shoes on. Nevertheless, the prevailing atmosphere was overwhelmingly one of enjoyment. This was enhanced when, after a time, the dead supi's lineage sent their spokesman across to the company with the agreed donation of gin, which was quickly shared out among the asafo members.
>
> Not long after this, another scuffle broke out, involving a man of the dead supi's matrilineage, who had been deep in conversation with the Tufohen and other senior asafo officers. The discussion turned to argument, and the man was dragged roughly out of the gathering by a number of asafo members, with none of the tolerance shown in earlier incidents. The asafo officers claimed afterwards that this man, apparently a well-to-do member of the lineage, had tried to bribe them to select himself as successor to the dead supi. His offer was rejected scornfully, the officers avowing that personal qualities were necessary for an efficient supi, and not merely a solid financial background.
>
> Still the asafo "play" continued, but after a while it began to be murmured that the coffin would soon be brought out, to take its place in the funeral procession. At this point, a party of about 20 asafo members, accompanied by the 4 "majors", slipped over to the house and pushed their way amidst the throng

of lineage mourners. Picking out one man, they grabbed him, and, in spite of his violent struggles, lifted him prone above their heads, like a corpse. Without delay, they carried him thus, back to the rest of the company, and set him upon a stool among the group of "majors" (supifo).

He was indeed the new supi, selected as successor in the company to the dead man. A youngish man in his mid-30s, he was, in fact, a full-brother to the previous incumbent, and went by the same surname. He had a reputable job as a factor with a trading company in a town elsewhere in the region, and, like his brother, he was of the Catholic faith. Now looking somewhat dazed, he sat on his stool, under a special guard of two asafo members and one of the younger "majors", the latter armed with his whip of office. All this while the drumming continued.

Several of the asafo leaders expressed satisfaction at the turn of events. The successor's evident reluctance to take up the position was much approved, for it was taken as confirmation that he possessed the qualities of character that go to make a successful officer. A good officer, explained these informants, requires a cool temper and sound judgement; any such man, they felt, would so well understand the extent of the responsibilities of office, that he would not initially be eager to assume them[1].

Several of the senior "majors" also claimed that neither the matrilineage in general, nor the successor himself, had had any foreknowledge of the identity of the man whom the asafo intended to seize. The company had, as is customary, they explained, approached the lineage elders upon the death of the former supi, asking that the kin group provide a replacement. But, the candidate then proposed by the lineage being regarded as unsuitable, the company merely went ahead and took a successor in line with its own preferences.

In next to no time after the capture, the funeral procession set out from the dead supi's house, led by the Headmaster of the Catholic Middle School. The latter, a native of Upper Saltpond, is widely known as the most influential layman in the local Catholic congregation; himself a "captain" (safohen) in No.1 company, he had absented himself from the concurrent asafo function. Then followed the coffin, not carried by asafo members, though they in theory lay claim to this privilege[2]. In accordance with the agreement reached so recently, the coffin was borne by members of the prestigious Catholic men's society, known as the Knights of St. John, to which the dead man had belonged. Nearly 30 of the "knights" were in attendance, all dressed formally in black suit and black tie. The church choir came next in line, and, behind them, in their uniform cloths, the all-female Singing Band and the two Catholic women's associations. Lastly came the individual mourners: lineage members, other than

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[1] See also Christensen 1954a:114, who reports that the successor is expected to resist his captors.

[2] Formerly, this would have been the occasion when was put into effect the practice of "carrying the corpse", this in a manner believed to indicate the identity of such persons as might have caused the death by witchcraft. (c.f. Christensen 1959:275). However, this custom seems to have been quite abandoned. Even in Low Town, although the corpse is admittedly carried in a wild and erratic fashion, there is no suggestion of any special significance in the procedure.

those remaining at the house, and other sympathisers. The procession moved quietly and reverently as it made its way through the centre of the town, towards the Catholic church.

At the very same moment, members of the asafo company lifted their new supi high in the air, and chaired him down the street in a parallel but pell-mell procession, the officers bringing up the rear. Only at the centre of the town did the two processions diverge, the cortege forking left to take a circular route back to the church. The asafo company took, instead, the rightward passage, towards the market-place.

Waiting there within, at the foot of the tutelary deity, Nana Eku, was Ɔkɔmfo Anan, the senior asafo priestess. The acceding supi was brought before her, still under the careful watch of the young "major" and the two asafo members. Supi Kwakye, the senior "major", also approached closely, as did one from among the "female captains". The other officers remained standing outside the mob of asafo members, who were soon milling and jostling around the deity.

Now took place the first part of the ritual of installation itself[1]. Ɔkɔmfo Anan began by mixing some red clay with water from the pot at the god's shrine, and with a little earth from the base of the tree. This formed a smooth paste, which she spread over the new supi's face and neck. She then removed her sandals, and poured a libation into the medicine-pot for Nana Eku, a procedure which was repeated by Supi Kwakye. The latter took a further portion of gin into his mouth, and spat the liquid over the new supi's head. After this, he was made to drink some "medicine", consisting of the clay mixture stirred into more water from the jar at the foot of the deity. The young supi, who had been guarding him, then put into his right hand an asafo whip of his own.

The priestess and Supi Kwakye paused briefly, in order to pour a libation to the lesser deities, Atafo (the "Twins"), at the rear of the tree. Meanwhile, the rest of the party began to make its way outside the market-place, to the second in importance of the Upper Saltpond deities, Nana Kwankyiwa. As soon as the principals had caught up with the others, another libation was poured, at his shrine, by Ɔkɔmfo Anan and Supi Kwakye. Again the new supi was given water from the medicine-jar to drink, and this time the act was extended to the other asafo officers present. The liquid would, they explained, confer protection against the harm inflicted by persons with "bad minds".

Now, the central part of the day's events had been completed. Ɔkɔmfo Anan waited only to splash protective "medicine", from beneath the deity, on to the assembled crowd; she then took her leave. The new supi was left in the custody of the company, to be paraded through the other quarters of the town, but most of the more senior officers returned directly to the scene of the earlier entertainments.

Before very long, the company members also returned, and again took up their station outside the house of the dead supi's matrilineage. Quickly they resumed their "play", setting their charge - still under his own special guard - back on his stool, as before. There, remaining quite silent, he was greeted by each of the "captains", both male and female, who went over to him, individually, to shake his hand and bid him "Welcome".

The playing continued all the while the coffin was inside the

[1] For comparison, see the brief treatment of J.B. Christensen (1954a:114).

> church, but now the drummers were slackening in their efforts. Then the funeral procession was seen to emerge from the church, and they began to sound their rhythms with renewed vigour as the cortege took the road to the adjacent cemetery. Still yet, the playing continued, though now becoming more and more desultory, at times ceasing, as the company lapsed into conversation and argument. Before long, mourners were seen drifting back in small groups from the cemetery. At last the officers, passing jokes to the effect that the asafo company were now all drunk, prepared to make their departure. The new supi was sent under his guard into confinement, and the asafo members were left to continue with their amusements for as long as they would.

For the following week or "eight days", the acceding supi ("major") is supposed to be secluded, in the care of another "major", at a secret address[1]. This should be well out of the reach of any passer-by who might have "bad eyes", or evil intent, with which to harm him. For much of the time, other asafo officers collect in his room, to watch his progress. During this period, it is considered necessary to ensure that his food is not contaminated by those who have prepared it, and, therefore, as a precaution, anyone who brings food or drink in to him is required to taste it, first, in the presence of the attendants.

The present initiate had accordingly been led away to a room in a house owned by one of the senior "majors" of the company. In the event, however, he was granted special dispensation to break his confinement on the Sunday afternoon, in order to return to his place of full-time employment. An extra libation was reportedly poured to Nana Eku to secure the deity's acceptance of this arrangement. On the Friday evening which closed his working week, the new supi re-entered his confinement, and the formalities resumed as if there had been no interruption.

On the following day, the Saturday, the installation rites were concluded with the "out-dooring" of the new supi. This, asafo officers maintained, can only take place if the successor remains in perfect health during the entire period of his confinement. The earlier events of this

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[1] c.f. Christensen 1954a:114.

ceremony were not witnessed directly by the writer, and they are, therefore, described here solely on the basis of informants' accounts.

Asafo officers reported that at the break of day on the Saturday morning (at about 4 a.m.), they had taken the new supi, with a quota of company members, down to the beach to be "bathed". This part of the ritual copies the rites which are said still sometimes to be practised for widows[1] after the death of their husbands; the subject of the attentions is apparently immersed in the sea three times over, and must afterwards assume new clothing, leaving his previously-worn garments in the ownership of the attendants. This task completed, the party apparently took their charge back to his place of confinement, for the rest of the morning. A meal at mid-day was provided by the initiate's matrilineage, who were required to kill 2 fowls to feed the asafo officers, both "captains" and "majors", including the new supi, all eating together. Previously installed officers avowed that they, personally, need not fear any evil influences transmitted by the initiate's matrikin, since these could only strike through the maternal line (see the discussion of witchcraft: Chap.9, pp.291-297). In order to protect their new colleague, however, there was supposedly a condition that the food be prepared only by widows who had themselves, at some time, undergone the rites on the beach. When the meal was over, the public "out-dooring" ceremony could be held. This proceeded as follows:-

> The public "out-dooring" of the new Supi Blankson[2]. The public "out-dooring" ceremony took place exactly one week after the funeral of the previous supi, thus also upon a Saturday afternoon. At this time, the new supi was brought by his attendants from his place of confinement to the market-place, where the asafo company had assembled. The ordinary members of the company had found places on benches which had been set out for them, and were occupying themselves in the usual manner of asafo "play". The asafo officers - that is, the "majors" (supifo); the "captains", male and female (asafohemfo and asafoakyerɛfo); and also the company "general" (the Tufohen) - formed a group around the deity

[1] Christensen, too (1954a:114), speaking not specifically of this rite but of the confinement in general, also reports the identification of new asafo officers with widows. Earlier in his book (ibid:73), he gives a brief description of the widows' rites themselves.

[2] For comparison, see Christensen 1954a:114-115.

Nana Eku. With them also were two senior male representatives of the new supi's matrilineage, who had joined the gathering to witness the proceedings.

The ceremony was opened by the senior "major", Supi Kwakye, who placed himself on a stool which had been set out underneath the deity, and immediately took the new supi on his lap. The accessor carried in his right hand the whip which had been given to him the week before; in his left hand, he carried an obviously ancient curved sword. The two men sat in this position for some time, while the drums continued to beat.

Soon, however, Supi Kwakye left his seat to begin the central part of the ritual. First, accompanied by two other "majors" and one of the "female captains", he poured a libation of gin to Nana Eku, and to the junior deities, Atafo, at the god's rear. Meanwhile, the company Spokesman had, under Supi Kwakye's instructions, been preparing a medicine, the principal ingredient of which was a basinful of green leaves.

The new supi was now called up to stand among the group, which had, by this time, absorbed a not wholly orderly crowd of asafo members. He was required to hand over the ceremonial sword to one of the asafo members who guarded him, and the latter held it pointing downwards, its tip touching the earth. As the sword stood thus, the senior "major" poured a libation on to the blade. The acceding supi was then made to repeat the oath of allegiance to the asafo company. Three times was the oath declaimed, and after each recitation, Supi Kwakye poured another libation upon the blade of the sword.

The ritual was then completed by the asafo priestess, who, on this occasion, was not Ɔkɔmfo Anan, but one of her deputies. The priestess, too, now poured a libation, praying to Nana Eku for good fortune on behalf of the asafo officers, and others present. She then presented the new supi with a drink of the previously prepared medicine, and splashed the rest generously over the other participants, with a bunch of leafy twigs. The remainder of the gin was shared in small sips between herself, the new supi, and the other asafo officers. This consumed, the company moved outside the market-place to the second deity, Nana Kwankyiwa, where the priestess poured another libation, and all the participants, even the least important, were given water from the medicine-jar to drink.

The company now fell in for the public parade of the newly installed supi through the town. As usual, the asafo drummers at the head of the procession led the way before the body of men, the latter singing asafo songs, and dancing as they went. The new supi, himself, followed next, still carrying the ceremonial sword and his whip. He was accompanied by the "female captains", who fanned him constantly with their cloths, in the same manner as they had tended the body of his predecessor on the day before the burial. The small group of male asafo officers, "majors" and "captains", brought up the rear.

On this occasion, unlike the week previously, the procession made a full circuit of Upper Saltpond. It passed first through Ekuadaa, the central quarter of town, where it paused outside the Chief's house, to pay a drum-salute to the Chief within. Further halts were made at points along the route, in order to drum acknowledgements to various nature-gods (abosom) living nearby. After Ekuadaa, the parade struck northwards, to take in

the quarters of Eguabadu and Kuranchikrom. These last fall under the immediate authority of the Sub-Chief (ɔdzekurow) whose Stool is located in Eguabadu (see Chap.4, p.102,106); they are also the areas where No.3 asafo company claims to operate. Having traversed this northern part of town, the procession turned back, along an alternative route, to cover the western sections before making its way, as on the week previously, to the house of the new supi's matrilineage.

This time, however, the company passed through the gate into the square courtyard of the house, where benches had been set out for them along three sides. The "majors" and "captains" were shown to positions along the central benches, and the new supi was placed to their front on a stool. The remaining "captains", and the "female captains", sat to their right, while to their left sat the company members, who quickly again took up singing the asafo songs. Along the fourth side sat the members of the new supi's matrilineage, with, in their midst - also on stools - , the lineage head (ebusuapanyin), and its spokesman.

The formalities began with the lineage spokesman pouring a libation of gin, from a bottle provided by the matrikin. No words were spoken, it being by now well after dusk; according to custom, the gods and spirits are not spoken with at night. As soon as the libation was completed, the young "major" who (officially) had had custody of the initiate during the confinement led his charge into the centre of the yard for inspection. The head of the matrilineage came forward, himself, to check that the returning successor was sound in body, and being satisfied, accepted him back. His stool was carried for him across the yard, and he was left sitting beside his lineage head. Thereafter, the matrilineage produced three bottles of local gin for the asafo company, which remained behind, merry-making, for as long as the drink lasted.

A very similar ritual is adopted, apparently, for the installation of the Chiefs of Upper Town. The installation of a Chief or Ohen, incidentally, is performed further to his installation as a Stool-Holder, which is not a matter for the asafo company, but for his own matrilineage. He is inducted to this latter position, as are all the other Stool-Holders in the community, through a ceremony performed by the mbabanyin or "sons", a group including both his own sons and the sons of former Stool-Holders of his lineage. (For the significance of this, see Chap.9, pp.294-295). In the central episode of this rite, he is lowered, by the mbabanyin, three times on to the Stool[1], great care being taken lest it should touch his testicles and thereby destroy his capacity to beget children.

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[1] c.f. Christensen 1954a:30.

Regrettably, an opportunity to witness the installation to the Chiefship of the current incumbent was narrowly missed, the event having taken place in September 1972, only very recently before the research began. Nevertheless, informants' descriptions of the proceedings referred to the same essential features as mentioned in connection with officers of the asafo company. It has already been noted (p.262) that, at death, a Chief is accorded the same ceremonial as an asafo officer. "Traditionally", too, the company should carry the body to the burial-place, just as it ought to take its own members and officers for burial. Formerly, there was a secret burial-ground reserved for Chiefs, but nowadays the coffin is said to be interred in the public cemetery. The whole event is surrounded by much rumour, not surprisingly, perhaps, this being a point at which Christian prohibitions confront some of the most fundamental of "traditional" values.

Once the candidature of a successor has been settled (c.f. Chap.4, pp.105-106), the installation of a new Chief or Ɔhen opens, so informants explain, when he is taken by the asafo company on a public parade through the streets of Upper Town. The only real difference between this parade, and those held for asafo officers, lies in the fact that the new Chief is carried in his ceremonial palanquin. After the parade, the successor is led off into "eight days" of confinement, during which time he is taught the correct dance-steps to perform in the palanquin, and other acts of ceremony. He is, reputedly, bathed with appropriate medicines, and precautions are taken with respect to his food, in order to preclude contamination by evil influences. If the week of seclusion passes without mishap, the new Chief can be taken for "out-dooring", starting first, apparently, with the rites of widowhood, held on the beach at first light. Later that day, he is again paraded through the town in his palaquin, when he is expected to display the skills he has learnt during his confinement. Finally, he is taken before the principal town deity, Nana Eku, in order to swear an oath

of duty, towards the asafo company and to the collectivity of Stool-Holders in the town. The oath, informants say, is marked by a libation of gin, poured upon the Sword of State as it rests upon the earth under Nana Eku.

One innovation which took place at this particular installation ceremony involved the Queen Mother (ɔbaahema) of Upper Saltpond, who was then taking up an office left vacant for two generations (see Chap.4, pp.107-108). Formerly, townspeople report, the Queen Mothers were not installed, but were merely named during the Town Festival. On this occasion, however, the Queen Mother was apparently confined by the asafo company at the same time as the new Chief, and underwent the installation rites together with him.

From the above discussion, it emerges that "rites of passage" in asafo ritual bear less of an individual, than a communal, significance. They have not been elaborated, for instance, in the manner of the rites of certain "traditional" men's associations elsewhere, in order to underwrite achievement of the status of adult or elder. This remains so, in spite of the adoption of the principle of age-grading in asafo organisation. Only in its funerary observances does an asafo company make any significant ritual recognition of the individual.

Asafo "rites of passage", then, are concerned primarily with the community. Here, they function not so much to differentiate the menfolk of the community into various categories. Rather, they validate the assumption, by particular individuals, of certain offices of weight in the community. Such positions include that of the Chief himself, and also those of the company officers, who together form an important focus of power in the community (see Chap.4, p.123).

The asafo rituals which mark these accessions confer legitimacy by, supposedly, securing the authorisation of the "traditional" nature-deities (abosom) of the locality. This is the first of the senses in which "traditional" nature-god ritual relates to local political organisation.

5. The Asafo, the Nature-gods and Territoriality. The present chapter, in its preceding sections, has been largely concerned with the ritual activities of the asafo companies. In these activities, as has by now been shown, the "traditional" nature-gods (abosom) invariably find a place. The rituals themselves are conducted for a number of different purposes, but a common factor can be discerned among them. As mentioned earlier (Chap.4, pp.121-122), and as the following discussion will show more clearly, asafo rituals provide opportunity for the expression of claims to territory.

The annual festivals themselves show very clearly the manner in which territorial claims are asserted through a ritual idiom. Indeed, this significance does not always remain purely latent. During the culminating public event of the Lower Saltpond ritual cycle (which alone of the two "Town Festivals" was actually held during the field period), claims of this kind are specifically dramatised. Members of No.2 asafo company are directed to take measurements along the bounds of the tract of land on the border with Upper Town (see map, Fig.8.1, p.239), where this public event takes place, in order to demonstrate that Low Town possesses indisputable rights over the area. Moreover, one of the "female captains" takes on display a small figurine, which grotesquely caricatures the Upper Town man from whom, Low Towners say, their community unreservedly acquired the rights to the land. This particular argument is rejected by Upper Town informants who are at all well-versed in their own community affairs, these latter maintaining that Low Town was merely granted permission to hold its festival upon the site. Senior members of No.1 asafo company claim, too, that, every year, No.2 company send them some "reminding rum" to notify them of the impending event, and they interpret this transaction as evidence of the fundamental truth of their own viewpoint. It is said, in both communities, that, some time in the 1950s, their respective asafo companies came to blows over the issue of the ownership of this piece of land, but too much time has since elapsed for the sequence of events to be reconstructed with any accuracy.

Nowadays, even many Upper Towners have no doubt but that the land belongs to Low Town; Low Town holds its festival there, they say, and consequently it must belong to them.

In reaching this judgement, such informants draw upon more general principles regarding the expression of territorial claims by means of asafo ritual. In effect, the very holding of an asafo parade is taken, itself, as a demonstration that the company in question holds rights over the area through which the route passes. Essentially, the parade proclaims the sway of the authority vested in the Chief or Sub-Chief of the "division" (oman) whose membership, in local thinking, becomes combined within the asafo company[1]. So it is that no company may march in ceremonial formation through another's territory without permission; to do so would be tantamount to an act of war. Thus the careful preliminaries should a company wish, for instance, to carry the corpse of one of its members over any great distance. Before this may be done, the company is required to make a presentation of drink to each and every other company along the road, in order to secure the necessary consent. Even then, it may not enter an alien territory until, following the interchange of courtesies, a formal invitation has been issued upon the drum (c.f. above, p.264).

Inside its own territory, most of the major rituals observed by an asafo company allow for a parade as part of the programme. Parades are, as shown earlier in this chapter, an important feature of the regular celebrations held at the time of the asafo and town festivals. They also figure among the proceedings on the more occasional event of the installation of a new Chief, or of an officer of the company. In such instances, the parades take in all the main streets of the town. Accordingly, they define the full extent of the Chief's and company's territory, and the reach of their authority. A proper understanding of this point throws light upon

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[1] As townspeople often affirm: "The asafo is the oman." The reality behind this claim is discussed in Chap.4, pp.112-113.

the disagreements noted earlier (pp.252-253) between No.1 and No.3 companies, regarding the arrangements for their festivals. These took place concurrently with a struggle by the so-called Sub-Chief (ɔdzekurow) for autonomy from the Chief (ɔhen), the Sub-Chief aspiring to assume, himself, the full rank of Chief (see Chap.4, pp.102,106). In this context, the claims of No.3 company in Eguabadu to hold its own Town Festival separately, and to parade, on that occasion, through Eguabadu and Kuranchikrom, assume considerable relevance. So too does the counter-assertion, of No.1 company, that the other group has customarily observed the Town Festival conjointly with themselves. In 1973, incidentally, No.1 company exerted the right, which itself it claimed, to cover the areas of Eguabadu and Kuranchikrom in its own processions (see pp.273-274). The practice, at that time, well expressed the overlapping nature, as seen in No.1 division, of the rights to territory in Upper Saltpond.

Asafo parades and festivals, then, enact the claims of the companies over their territories. This, in itself, is acknowledged locally, but there is a yet deeper level on which it may be understood. The relationship between the asafo companies and the land may also be expressed in terms of the nature-gods (abosom) who inhabit the local environment. As explained earlier in this chapter (p.240), each company regards the deities living in its particular area of Saltpond as being its own. These gods should be accorded the acknowledgement of a libation or offering during the period of the annual festivals (see pp.249-250). But this argument can also be taken conversely. There is a further sense in which, whenever a company performs the rites for a local deity, it claims ownership over the god concerned. Thereby, the company asserts the territorial rights of the division it represents, over the tract of land upon which the god stands. This, in turn, proclaims the authority, in that area, of the Chief or Sub-Chief who heads the division.

An implication of this kind is clearly evident in the series of

incidents described below. Although most of the events mentioned took place before the field period opened, and though much of the following account is therefore based on hearsay, the episode is regarded as so illuminating, for the purpose here, that its inclusion is warranted.

Case 30. The dispute over Nana Ɔbiripa. Out along the foreshore, just to the west of the Atufa Lagoon, there supposedly lives one of the now more important of the Saltpond nature-gods, known as Nana Ɔbiripa. The name Ɔbiripa actually refers, not only to the deity, but also to the stretch of land which adjoins the beach at that spot. Here stands the tree in which, according to very common belief, the god has his home. Other informants avow that the tree is merely the site where the god's rituals are performed. His true home, they say, is a large rock, under cover of the sea at all but the lowest of tides. A former Upper Town Chief is said to have commented that he could remember when the tree itself was planted, and his remark is taken, by those who repeat it, as settling the matter. However, the main point at issue lies elsewhere.

Virtually all informants agree that, initially, Nana Ɔbiripa "belonged" to No.1 asafo company in Upper Town. Some concede, though, that the company had allowed their annual rites for the deity to be neglected. Therefore, say townspeople of this view, No.2 company in Low Town concluded, as was perfectly natural, that the god belonged to no-one. Thereupon, the Low Town company took to performing the rite itself.

This led to active confrontation between the two Saltpond communities which first erupted, apparently, in the early 1950s, at the time of the festivals. Upper Town informants explain that, when at last they set out to resume their observance of the annual rites, No.2 company made efforts to prevent them. Stones were thrown, and, it is said, even the guns were fired. No.1 company claims to have won an outright victory, an assertion now difficult to check. It is certain, though, that the dispute simmered away for many years thereafter, breaking out again as violence in the mid-1960s.

This disagreement between the two communities was not concerned with ritual proprieties alone, but also with the question of the ownership of land. Even before the first incident occurred in the 1950s, the title to the area known as Ɔbiripa had become a subject of argument. This site had initially, as all parties are agreed, comprised part of the Stool Lands of one of the most prominent of the Upper Town matrilineages. However, following a series of transactions which will be described in more detail elsewhere (see Chap.9, Case 39, p.302), the land fell into the hands of the Chief of Low Town. The latter regarded his ownership as absolute, and the land, therefore, as part and parcel of Low Town territory. This, the people of No.1 division in Upper Town disputed, alleging that only rights of usufruct had been transferred in the very first conveyance.

By 1973, the original owners of the land had taken their case to litigation. The court's decision was still awaited. Meanwhile, though, there was no open conflict. The two asafo companies preserved a tacit truce, each, seemingly, omitting to perform the annual festival for Nana Ɔbiripa. Nevertheless,

> both communities continued to lay claim to the deity verbally. Ɔkɔmfo Anan, the senior possession-priestess of No.1 company in Upper Town, numbered him expressly amongst her own charges. Likewise, in Low Town there was a priestess officially responsible for his care.

The deity Nana Ɔbiripa appeared to be the only god in Saltpond which was, in 1973, the subject of dispute. Thus, there was no outstanding issue of this kind setting No.3 company in opposition to either of the other asafo groups. No.3 company's right to provide for the needs of the gods it regarded as its own - those within the area it considered to be its territory - was fully accepted, in spite of the ambiguous nature of its territorial claims (as noted above, p.279). There was no question that No.1 company might demand to share this responsibility in the manner, for instance, that this group insisted it shared entitlement to parade over the area.

The above discussion makes clear that the nature-god ritual practised by asafo companies has profound implications for considerations of territoriality. Moreover, its relevance in this connection is shown to be not merely a preoccupation belonging to the past. Instead, it remains so much a live issue that, within times which may be treated as contemporary, it has apparently provoked asafo companies in Saltpond to violence.

This territorial significance of asafo ritual is perhaps the context in which, continuingly, nature-god belief relates most intimately to "traditional" political organisation.

Nevertheless, before leaving the matter, there may be mentioned another such connection, one in which the "traditional" rituals are deliberately manipulated, according to the changing state of local politics. This will be the subject of the following section.

6. Traditional Nature-god Ritual in Political Strategy. Recurrently throughout this chapter, there has been reference to the fact that the "traditional" rituals described are not always treated as the overriding obligation they might seem. Almost invariably, an area of choice is allowed, as to whether a particular ritual should be observed or not. A distinction is sometimes made between a basic component of simple ritual, which is in each instance regarded as essential, and the additional ceremonial elaborations, which are purely optional. The decision between the two courses of action often rests on no factor more meaningful than the expense involved. In other circumstances, though, the decision can bear very significant political implications.

One notable example is reliably reported to have occurred only a mere four months before the fieldwork began in 1972:-

> Case 31. The salt-touching ceremony at Lower Saltpond, and the disagreements of Upper Saltpond with the Paramount Chief. The case in question arose in connection with a ritual which is performed only occasionally, following the installation in Yamoransa of a Paramount Chief of Nkusukum State. At some convenient time after his installation, the new Paramount is required to attend in Nankesedo (Low Town), the earliest of the Saltpond settlements, in order to participate in a ceremony which is said to confirm him in his office. In the central event of the proceedings, the Chief of Low Town touches the Paramount's tongue with salt. Salt has long been known to crystallise around the Atufa Lagoon. Although little of the religious significance of this rite became apparent from the hearsay accounts which were received, it may be recalled that the lagoon is supposedly the home of a powerful nature-deity (bosom) who goes by the same name.
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> When the events to be described here took place, the Paramount of Nkusukum was not, in fact, newly-installed. Nevertheless, the ceremony had not been performed, and arrangements had been made for it to be held in the August.
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> The Paramount travelled to Saltpond by car, as far as the by-pass at the western boundary of the town, where Nkusukum territory begins[1]. From this point, he wished to proceed onwards in ceremonial and customary fashion, riding in his palanquin through the main street of Upper Town (No.1 division of the State) into Low Town. However, the elders of Upper Town refused him the passage which normally they would have granted him, declaring that, if he had to cross their territory at all, he should travel by car. Men from No.1 asafo company collected together to bar his path, and a long argument ensued. Tempers rose, and

[1] Saltpond is situated in an outpost of Nkusukum away from the main body of territory; see Chap.4, p.100.

stones were thrown, until the police arrived to take control of the situation, and cleared the way for the palanquin. The Paramount having completed his journey, he was sent a message, while still in Low Town, warning him that, should he attempt the return passage, he would be met with still greater violence. Wisely, perhaps, he left Saltpond after the ceremony in his car.

When the fieldwork started the following December, these events were still the subject of many conversations, and one member of No.1 asafo company was serving a prison sentence for his part in the incident.

The cause of this confrontation lay in the condition of relations between the Chief of Upper Saltpond and the Paramount Chief of the State. These had grown strained, lately, following a disputed succession to the Upper Saltpond chiefship. After the death of the previous Chief in 1971, two opposing factions put forward candidates for the succession. The dead Chief's matrikin nominated one of his sisters' sons to follow him, but, in addition, another quite unrelated matrilineage (bearing, by chance, the same clan name of Aboradze) claimed the right to provide a successor. The question as to whether the chiefship is necessarily restricted within a particular line of matrilineal descent has been considered in an earlier chapter (Chap.4, pp.105-106). It was there concluded that the "King-Makers" are free to change the ruling dynasty should they wish, so long as they can secure the support of the townspeople. In this case, however, appearances in 1973 suggested that, although argument had persisted, the balance of opinion in the town had favoured the former Chief's matrilineal heir.

But in this affair, apparently, the Paramount Chief became involved. As President of the Traditional Council of Nkusukum State, he was empowered under law to hear chieftaincy disputes in his area, in order to determine the facts behind the matter. The dispute had therefore been taken to his court for mediation. He had given his judgement, however, in favour of the candidate who apparently enjoyed the least support among the townspeople. The other claimant had responded by taking the case to the High Court in Accra. There the verdict went against the Paramount Chief, the judge ruling that, unlike in Ashanti in former times, a Paramount today possesses no right to enforce his own choice in opposition to the wishes of the people. This litigation was in progress at very much the same time as the above-mentioned conflict took place; when the case was concluded, the successful faction returned to Saltpond, and installed their own claimant, almost immediately, in early September.

In this disagreement lay the basis of No.1 division's non-cooperation with their Paramount over the salt-touching ritual. By denying the Paramount entry to their town territory, the people of No.1 division were, in effect, rejecting his right to exert authority over them (or as they themselves sometimes expressed the matter: "claiming their independence"). The specific right they were insisting upon, was, that they should determine their internal affairs without interference. The Paramount's forcible assertion of his right

of passage demonstrated his own view that his judgement should carry overriding weight.

The breach in the relations between No.1 division and the Paramount continued throughout the entire year of fieldwork. It brought about yet another deliberate manipulation of "traditional" ritual. For this reason, explicitly, the Upper Town Chief failed to participate in the Paramount's Stool Festival for 1973 (see above p.243). At very much the same time, though, he journeyed to the capital of a quite different and highly influential Fante State, Ekumfi, in order to attend the Stool Festival of the Paramount there. The latter is related by marriage to the Upper Saltpond Queen Mother, who accompanied the Chief on his visit. The Ekumfi festival was spoken of, by some of those included in the party, as offering an acceptable alternative to the festival of their own Paramount Chief.

By the end of the year, the impaired relations with the Paramount were coming to be acknowledged as inconvenient, even though the greater part of the annoyance was alleged to fall upon the Paramount himself. Upper Town informants began to make much of the customary requirement that No.1 asafo company should lead the Paramount in his ceremonial processions. Their own unavailability, they contended, left him unable to pay formal visits outside his own State. Be that as it may, contacts were by this time said to have been made, with a view to re-establishing proper relations. No results were apparent, however, before the fieldwork ended.

From the above, it transpires that, twice within the space of a year, the performance of a "traditional" ritual was affected by the disagreement between the new Chief of Upper Saltpond and the Paramount. In each case, the Upper Saltpond contingent refused their cooperation, and in one of these, the refusal led to physical conflict.

Deliberate absenteeism from "traditional" ritual occurred, or more correctly, was threatened, on other occasions during the field period. The most notable of these concerned the annual Upper Town Ayer Festival

(c.f. pp.250-254), which, by report, had been seriously impaired, the year previously, by the non-participation of the faction supporting the unsuccessful claimant to the Upper Town chiefship. Their support in 1973 was no more readily forthcoming. Moreover, sections within No.3 division were interpreting the procedure for the festivals in a manner quite opposed to the No.1 division viewpoint, a manner, too, which accorded more closely with their own political aspirations (see above, pp.252-253, and, especially, pp.278-279). Accordingly, it can be a matter for little surprise that, in this particular year, the Upper Town Festival was abandoned altogether. Some informants were prepared to admit that the true cause of the Chief's and elders' decision lay in the above-mentioned political disaffections, rather than in the explanations which were circulated officially.

Thus, "traditional" nature-god ritual is still being deliberately manipulated, by its practitioners, to accord with - even, sometimes, in furtherance of - political aspirations within the "traditional" system. It provides a useful set of strategies for the pursuit of objectives which, even in the 1970s, are still thought to be of positive value. This is the third of the senses in which "traditional" nature-god ritual bears a continuing relation to the "traditional" political organisation.

7. Conclusion. At the beginning of the previous chapter (Chap.7, p.211), the question was asked whether "traditional" ritual retains any real significance in the present day. Subsequently, it was shown that beliefs concerning the "traditional" nature-deities (abosom) are still frequently drawn upon, by individuals striving to achieve their personal goals and aspirations. The present chapter has now demonstrated the continuing vitality of these same beliefs, in the context of the "traditional" political organisation of the town. They are shown, here, as being still manipulated in order to validate the relationships which arise, and fluctuate, in that area where community and chiefship merge. The "traditional" organisation has itself already been shown to be of continuing importance, in spite of the far-

reaching political and economic changes of the last century or more. As an earlier chapter has made clear (Chap.4, pp.128-129), the "traditional" organisation still has its foundation in differential access to economic resources, and still articulates effective - if local - power relationships. It is, no doubt, for this same reason, that associated "traditional" beliefs have also survived, despite the impressive inroads which the new religion of Christianity has carved in the way of life of the townspeople.

The present chapter has mentioned (pp.256-257) how the first of the Christian churches to arrive upon the scene in the 19th century made concerted efforts, both locally and elsewhere, to undermine the intimate connection which exists between "traditional" political institutions and "traditional" ritual. These attacks, however, the "traditional" religion, in Saltpond, to a great extent survived. More recently, churches at the national level have arrived at a measure of compromise, accepting that parts, at least, of the "traditional" "rituals of state" must continue to be observed, and aiming, therefore, to divest them of their "heathen" elements. The individuals drawn, as actors, into these events have before them a wider choice than that merely between full participation, and total non-involvement. This measure of flexibility explains the strategies shown, in this chapter, to be adopted by those active Christians who become caught up in asafo affairs.

None the less, the body of men in the company - the ordinary asafo members - are invariably people without an active, or even a professed, attachment to Christian churches. Asafo companies - the nature-god cults in their communal form - provide a sphere of ritual activity for Saltpond-born males who have had little or no education, and whose "class" status is low. This point will be taken up again, in contrast to persons in opposing categories, in Chapter 11 (pp.336,341).

Before the point is dealt with, however, it is necessary to conclude the earlier discussion regarding misfortunes, such as sickness, and the measures which counter them. These are the subjects of the following two chapters.

Chapter 9. CAUSES OF MISFORTUNE: WITCHCRAFT, NATURE-GODS, AND THE DEAD.

Like most people elsewhere, those in Saltpond who are stricken by misfortune - whether in the form of sickness, or in some other guise - usually respond by trying to attribute it to a particular cause.

Local culture supplies a variety of possible interpretations. To begin with, mishaps are believed sometimes to be afflicted by the nature-gods (abosom) referred to in the previous chapters, or by the spirits of departed ancestors (nananom: "grandfathers"). The latter are thought to work most probably in punishment of some definite offence, the former perhaps to act through sheer caprice (c.f. pp. 216-217, 224, 301). Then again, it is believed that the agent of misfortune may be a human person who is deliberately resorting to techniques of evil magic. In most instances, however - as in the majority of cases included in the present chapter - , blame is attributed to beings that are generally described, by English-speaking Fante informants, as "evil spirits" (in Fante: mbɔnsam; sing: abɔnsam).

But, in this connection, popular Ghanaian-English usage is misleading. As a following discussion will show more clearly (pp.288-289), the concept held locally of the "evil spirit" is very similar to the understanding which anthropologists have reached, under the influence of the work of E. Evans-Pritchard, regarding the "witch". Thus it is witchcraft that, in this locality, is the most commonly accepted explanation of misfortune.

Witchcraft, therefore, is the principal subject of the present chapter. The alternative causes to which misfortune is at times attributed will receive only a relatively brief mention.

The following pages will indicate that witchcraft beliefs, arising principally in the tensions of a kinship system based upon matrilineal descent, still have a profound significance in Saltpond in the 1970s. In spite of the fact that they are discredited by Christian churches of at least the Establishment type, they are widely accepted, even by persons

of high "class" status who are active Establishment church members. Witchcraft beliefs are, indeed, so integral to the local social organisation, even in its contemporary form, that an identification has been made between these indigenous notions and certain Christian concepts. This, it will be shown, helps to justify the retention of these beliefs, and, moreover, serves to validate the activities of new organisations that are emerging to counter the supposed dangers of witchcraft.

1. A Note on Terminology. Before proceeding with the discussion of witchcraft, it is necessary to make a brief comment on terminology, since an unusual usage was proposed in the only previous intensive study of the Fante peoples. Its writer, J.B. Christensen, suggested that the expression "worker of evil magic" was preferable to "witch", remarking in this context that the latter, in English usage, is generally taken to refer to an aged female[1].

Christensen used the term "magic" in a second and rather different sense, in referring to the conscious manipulation of "charms" and "medicines" with either good or evil intent[2]. The English word "charm", in his work, stands for the vernacular suman, which denotes a ritual object with, supposedly, intrinsic power to bring about some or other desired result. Objects going by this name had earlier been described, in connection with the Asante, by R.S. Rattray[3], and they were also, apparently, in fairly common use in the localities which Christensen dealt with. In Saltpond, on the other hand, although objects such as these are made use of, they are most commonly referred to by the Fante word edur. This, which is usually translated in English as "medicine", covers not only objects designed for ritual manipulation, but also substances prescribed by "traditional" practitioners for healing purposes (c.f. Chap.7, p.232), and drugs procured from hospital.

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[1] Christensen 1954a:74,n.1; see also Christensen 1959:274.
[2] Christensen 1954b:390; 1959:259,264-266.
[3] Rattray 1927:23. See also Busia 1950:195.

In this study, the term "evil magic" will be used only in connection with the deliberate manipulation of edur ("medicine") for nefarious ends[1].

The term "witch" is now understood by most anthropologists to hold the meaning first assigned to it by Evans-Pritchard[2] when he spoke of:

> "a supposed psychic emanation ..... which is believed to cause injury to health and property."

This term, therefore, is a more appropriate rendering for the Fante notion of - as Christensen puts it[3]:

> "a malevolent force that is the projection of the will or soul of the individual who possesses it."

Moreover, the term has been used in almost all other studies of Akan peoples[4]. For these reasons, Christensen's own expression will not be repeated here.

2. "Traditional" Witchcraft Ideology. Returning to the situation in Saltpond, it must be said, from the start, that "traditional" witchcraft belief has, to a large extent, been retained.

Informants' descriptions of the characteristics of witches tend to differ slightly, at least with regard to their more superficial features. Nevertheless there is a broad measure of agreement over their most fundamental attributes. Witches are believed by most people, for instance, to be visible at night, in the form of unexplained lights. They are also believed frequently to take animal shape, and the persistent presence of any animal near a house is thought to be a strong indication that the home is threatened.

The harm that witches inflict can arise, supposedly, in a variety of ways. The following statement, though, from Mr. Opoku (Case 6, Chap.6, p.174) expresses a commonly held view of their general method of operation. (Mr. Opoku is a professed Christian with secondary education, but not, though, an active

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[1] c.f. Evans-Pritchard 1937:9.
[2] Evans-Pritchard 1937:9; see also ibid:21.
[3] Christensen 1959:274.
[4] See, most notably, Rattray 1927:28-31; Fortes 1950:275; Busia 1950:195-196; Busia 1951:74; Field 1948:173-174,179,185 n.1; Field 1960:35-41; Brokensha 1966:148-149,184-186; Bleek 1975:337,n.1. Also the very generalised study of witchcraft in Ghana (largely among the Akan), Debrunner 1959.

church member.) He explained:-

> "There are different kinds of witch. Some of them say they practise only for their own protection, or for the protection of those near them. But others go out in groups at night hunting, and bring their own children for the group to eat. This makes the person die."

Witchcraft, however, does not always bring about the extreme of death. As shown previously (p.287; see also below, pp.310-311), any form of sickness, and especially headache or stomach trouble, can be attributed to this cause. It is, moreover, often thought to bring about infertility or miscarriage in women, and impotence in men, some witch having supposedly "eaten" the reproductive organs. Mental disturbance is sometimes interpreted in the same way. Alternatively upon a material plane, a victim may suffer impoverishment, the witch having supposedly enriched himself at the other's expense. Any abnormally rich person may well be regarded as wielding the power of witchcraft and the same accusation is sometimes made against Europeans as the only possible explanation of their extraordinary inventiveness[1].

It is the overwhelming consensus among present-day inhabitants of the town, whether native-born or immigrant, and from the illiterate to the highly educated, that witchcraft remains a constant danger. Some informants admittedly concede that witches were more active in the vicinity in the 1950s than they are now, but, scarcely without exception, all proclaim a belief in their continuing existence and effectiveness. The following comment, given in English by Mr. Mansen (Case 7, Chap.6, p.180) - an elder in one of the Establishment churches, wealthy, and with a good education for a man of his generation - is very typical:-

> "Witches are very common here. There are many varieties, and you can see them on the beach at night. They may be red, or green or any colour. They do all their work by night. Some of them take money, others eat people. They work by harming you in the spirit.

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[1] Christensen's descriptions of Fante witchcraft ideology (1954a:75; 1954b:396; 1959:274-275) are broadly similar. For versions of the likewise similar ideologies among other Akan groups, see: Rattray 1927:29-30; Field 1960:35-37; Brokensha 1966:185; Bleek 1975:327-328. See also Debrunner 1959:19-51.

"We call them anyɛn or abɔnsam, and ɔbayifo in Twi[1]. All these things are exactly the same."

Mr. Mansen then went on to describe a number of cases in which an attack by witchcraft had, he said, brought about sickness, misfortune, or even death.

Witchcraft beliefs, then, continue to be held by townspeople, even by those with high "class" status and active church membership. The following sections of this chapter will consider the social contexts in which these beliefs become relevant, and the way in which the beliefs are being reconciled with Christian doctrine.

3. Direction of Witchcraft Attacks: Witchcraft and Matrilinearity.

According to the "traditional" ideology surrounding witchcraft (anyɛn), as it was explained by informants in Saltpond, the most likely instigator of a witchcraft attack is a fellow member of the matrilineage (ebusua)[2]. (This, interestingly enough, is consistent with other studies of witchcraft in societies organised on the basis of matrilineal descent; among these, the most notable is, perhaps, the work of M.G. Marwick on the Cewa of Zambia[3].)

Mr. Opoku (c.f. p.289) - who was speaking in the house owned by his minor lineage, soon after the commemorative funeral rites held for his lately deceased mother's brother - put the matter thus:-

"Anyɛn is very powerful inside the ebusua. It is not very powerful outside."

He went on to relate a series of events which, he said, had occurred in recent years in his own matrilineage:-

Case 32. Death among Mr. Opoku's matrikin. "Myself," began Mr. Opoku, "I killed two cobras only about two months ago outside this house. They were anyɛn and

[1] Christensen (1954a:74,n.1; 1959:274) reported the tendency to use one of the Fante terms, anyɛn, predominantly to refer to female witches, and the other, bɔnsam, more specifically for male witches. This usage, also noted of the Asante by Rattray (1927:288), was not apparent in Saltpond, where either term could be applied to either sex.

[2] Christensen, working in the 1950s (1954a:74-75; 1954b:275; 1959:396-397), also reported a connection between witchcraft and matrilinearity. Indeed, his information, apparently, was that witchcraft could only be effective within the matrilineage (c.f. below, p.297). A similar tendency is apparent in other Akan groups (c.f. Rattray: 1927:28,31; Fortes 1950:275; Ward 1956:55; Field 1960:35; Debrunner 1959:35; McCleod 1975:111; Bleek 1975:335.

[3] Marwick 1952:130-134,215-217; 1965a:73,94-98,146-162; 1965b:174-176. See also Nadel 1952:22-27; Mitchell 1956:137-138,178.

> were catching all the brothers and sisters. But anyen didn't touch me. I am strong. I was born that way."
>
> The house in question had accommodated Mr. Opoku's mother and her brothers and sisters, as well as himself and his elder brother (when not away in employment), and other much younger matrikin.
>
> "It was because of this," he continued. "that there were so many deaths these last years. First the youngest brother, then my mother herself, and other sisters, and now this year my uncle. Now there is just this my mother left in the house - she is my mother's younger sister.
>
> "My uncle was the eldest of the brothers, so he was the head of the house. But my uncle had no estate to leave, so there was nothing to defray the funeral expenses."

Various problems had beset this matrilineal group over the preceding years, including a long-standing altercation involving the deceased household-head's wife, and also the repudiation, by a closely-related matrilineage segment, of help with funeral expenses. But although it was assumed that a lineage member was to blame, no steps had apparently been taken to discover or confirm the identity of the actual witch. It is therefore not possible to connect this witchcraft case to any particular dispute. (This is not always so, as following examples will demonstrate.) No counter-measures were admitted to have been attempted either, but Mr. Opoku concluded:-

> "A certain prophet came to my uncle's Thanksgiving Service just now, and when he came into the house, he said at once that anyen had been in the house, but they had now gone."

Not only are witchcraft cases expected to occur most frequently within the matrilineage, but they are also thought most probably to involve closely related lineage members. As among the Mesakin of the Sudan, described in the significant early study of S.F. Nadel[1], one of the relationships acknowledged as the most vulnerable is that between the mother's brother and the sister's son. (These terms, though, need to be understood, on occasion, in the classificatory sense.) The latter is thought to be ever anticipating his senior's demise, and the inheritance which will then be his; the mother's brother, on the other hand, is considered likely to use his powers of

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[1] Nadel 1952:22-23.

witchcraft in order to protect his position. Contrary to the case of the Mesakin, however, witchcraft attacks occurring in this context are thought, in Saltpond, to be inflicted in both directions. This approximates more closely to the state of affairs that Marwick found among the Cewa[1]. Marwick's own analysis brings out, clearly, the fact that witchcraft accusations between matrikin often occur in a context where a junior aspires to the property or political office held by a senior.

Cases involving property, in Saltpond, proved difficult to document during the research. The following illustration refers to a conflict of interest between close matrikin with respect to political office:-

> Case 33. Death of the Queen Mother's mother. The influential role in Upper Saltpond of the female office-holder known as the "Queen Mother" has been described previously (Chap.4, pp.107-109), when it was mentioned that, just before the start of this research, a new incumbent had been installed after a vacancy of many years. The acceding Queen Mother, a woman of about 40, had a mother of her own still then living. This old lady, who had never herself held the office, died during the field period at the age of 81. Her funeral and commemorative rites were observed with all due ceremonial, expense, and speed.
>
> The Queen Mother and her three sisters, though all actively committed to the Methodist Church, believed that the death was caused by the witchcraft of their mother's own brother. The latter had been, of long standing, the recognised "Stool-Holder" of their Eguana (Parrot) No.2 matrilineage, enjoying all the prestige and influence in the wider community which these offices bring (c.f. Chap.3, pp.66-67; Chap.4, pp.103-104). The circumstances surrounding the death were related primarily by the Queen Mother's husband, himself an active Methodist, who had been closely involved in the deliberations.
>
> The husband claimed that it had been the Queen Mother's mother herself who had, with her daughters, first made the decision to assert the right of their matrilineage to put forward a Queen Mother in the town. Only thereafter, by his account, was the claim forwarded to the "King-Makers" and the asafo elders. But according to the husband, the action displeased the old lady's brother, accustomed as he had been, as Stool-Holder, to take precedence among his lineage-kin. Thenceforth, though retaining his office, he would be required to give way before a yet more eminent female office-holder from his own lineage. He would have to defer, moreover, to one whose word would, in theory, carry the weight to override his own, with those of the other "King-Makers", in the selection of a new Chief (c.f. Chap.4, pp.105). The question of the management of lineage-owned property was not discussed, and so its relevance to this issue remains uncertain.

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[1] Marwick 1952:217-218,220-222; 1965a:95-96,148-162.

> The husband did not make clear whether the Stool-Holder displayed his objections openly. Be that as it may, the old lady is said to have had a dream, shortly after these events, in which her brother "invited her to sit among his friends". In less than a year, the old lady was dead.
>
> She had indeed been ailing for some time before she died, and her relatives had taken her to the local hospital for medical treatment, only to be told, however, that she was suffering from old age, for which nothing could be done. Her daughters, though they acknowledged the fact of her advanced years, remained convinced that an additional factor was involved in her complaint. Therefore, upon the apparent initiative of the Queen Mother's husband, they called in a prophetess from the Twelve Apostles' Church at Eja, a village some 7 miles away. This woman, who reputedly once practised as a priestess of the "traditional" gods (abosom), but who eventually discarded her cult figures in order to join her present church, is widely regarded as exceptionally powerful.
>
> When the Prophetess visited the sick old lady, she, also, advised that it was then too late to do anything to help her. But she further, it is said, confirmed that "somebody was working against her", though without naming an actual culprit.
>
> Her diagnosis was taken by the old lady's daughters as the irrefutable confirmation of their previous suspicions. They did not overlook the fact that the Stool-Holder himself was now too indisposed to fulfil any public engagements. Nevertheless, the train of events was not made widely known in the town, and most townspeople were content to accept her death as the natural consequence of her years.

Consistent with this intimate connection between witchcraft and matrilinearity, which ideology assumes, is the further belief that the power of witchcraft is inherited in the female line[1]. Accordingly, certain local matrilineages are notorious for producing exceptionally dangerous witches, generation after generation. On the other hand, according to accepted ideology, this same power is never transmitted from a man to his own sons.

A man's sons are the only persons whom he need never fear, upon this account, and whom his lineage may fully trust. This belief determines much lineage ritual, and even sometimes the selection of a lineage Stool-Holder himself (c.f. Chap.3, pp.79-80), for, informants say, only the sons of Stool-Holders can be allowed into the Stool-Room to observe the necessary rites. No actual lineage members, other than the Stool-Holder himself, are permitted to enter, for any among them with the power of witchcraft would be

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[1] This belief is noted in the literature on other Akan peoples, e.g. by Debrunner (1959:54) and Field (1960:37). By their accounts, however, witchcraft is believed to be more often acquired through accidental contact, or else, according to Debrunner (1959:57-59), by deliberate purchase.

able to suppress the spirit which has supposedly been induced into the Stool by repeated offerings. Thus it would cease to protect the lineage, and harm would befall the lineage members. For this reason, it is said, any prospective Stool-Holder must have at least one son, in order that the Stool rituals may be performed.

Belief in the immunity against witchcraft attacks between a man and his sons persists, despite the fact that a man's own sons are increasingly claiming a portion of his estate. This claim, however, is generally more in accordance with his personal inclinations than is the claim of his lineage heirs. It is tempting to conclude that if, as some sources suggest[1], there has been a rise in witchcraft cases in the middle part of the 20th century, this has been due, in part, to the growing conflict between matrilineal and patrilineal heirs[2]. However, the present research does not provide material of a kind either to confirm, or to refute, such a hypothesis.

The cases which, so far, have been quoted, are typical examples of witchcraft accusations made within the matrilineage. Nevertheless, other case studies show that accusations are directed against non-lineage-members often enough for this, also, to be significant. Sometimes the presumed culprit is a non-matrilineal - more specifically, an affinal - relative living in the same house as the victim, or a person standing in such a relationship that they might well have been co-resident with the core members of the minor lineage. The following is an instance of this:-

> Case 34. Mr. Mansen's daughter. Mr. Mansen, a respected local man active in one of the Establishment churches (c.f. Case 7, Chap.6, p.180), has a daughter, Ama. At the time of this research, Ama, then aged 12, was living 7 miles away at the Twelve Apostles' Church in Eja, with the same renowned Prophetess just referred to in Case 33. The girl had formerly lived in Mr. Mansen's own house, where, as young girls customarily do, she helped his wife with the household tasks. This wife, whom Mr. Mansen had

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[1] e.g. Christensen 1954a:75; 1954b:397. On this same point among other Akan peoples, see: Field 1948:173-175; Fortes 1950:275; Ward 1956:55; Debrunner 1959:62,75.

[2] This suggestion is in fact made by Christensen (1954b:397); it is also implied in his monograph (1954a:75,132).

long since "wedded" in church (c.f. Case 12, Chap.6, p.183), was not Ama's mother, being herself childless.

It had happened, apparently, shortly before the research began, that the girl had grown out of control, repeatedly running away to distant towns, and behaving as if mad. Eventually, Mr. Mansen took her to Eja to consult the Prophetess, who diagnosed that she was not insane, but rather suffering from the witchcraft of Mr. Mansen's wife. The Prophetess attributed the latter's motive to a fear of losing her share of Mr. Mansen's estate to her step-daughter.

It was widely known, in fact, that the couple's marriage was not in a happy state, and the wife's childlessness after 19 years was the subject of much comment. Most informants regarded her as fortunate, in so far that her marriage had not actually been terminated, as would probably have been the case for most women in the same circumstance. (One reason for this was the enormous expense involved in dissolving a statutory marriage; c.f. Chap.3, pp.86-87,90.) Nevertheless, at much the same time as his daughter's troubles, Mr. Mansen had contracted an additional marriage by customary rites with another woman, one from a highly influential Upper Town Stool-Holding lineage. Though left in occupation of Mr. Mansen's house, to which he returned every evening, the so-called "wedded wife" was required neither to cook his food, nor share his bed.

In spite of the fact that Mr. Mansen had made, in his will, such provision for his "wedded wife" as could not legally be put aside by any of his other heirs, and although he had been careful to make his wishes known verbally to his sister and sister's son, the "wedded wife's" feelings of insecurity remained. She continued to proclaim her grievances loudly throughout the field period. In this situation, Mr. Mansen felt it best, following the Prophetess's advice, to allow his daughter to remain at the Eja church semi-permanently. Consequently, it was arranged that she should complete her education at the Eja Middle School, and during the field period she gave no further trouble.

Thus, witchcraft accusations beyond the matrilineage may, sometimes, involve relatives of wider categories. They may equally, though, concern totally unrelated persons. A useful example of a case of this kind is offered by the statement of the Mr. Tetteh, in Chapter 7 (p.221), who laid blame for his so-called "spiritual ailment" upon less successful rivals at work. Mr. Tetteh, of course, is an immigrant to Saltpond, but native townspeople, too, occasionally feel themselves afflicted in the same way. Such cases being the exception rather than the rule, however, the best instance to become known to me during the research - again concerning Mr. Mansen - is one that apparently happened quite some time back:-

Case 35. Mr. Mansen and the envious townsmen. Mr. Mansen reports that, some 10 years previously, he was unexpectedly approached by the Prophet of the Twelve Apostles' Church in Low Town, who was then still quite a young man, and relatively inexperienced. Nevertheless, this latter had come to warn that he had had a vision, in which he had "seen" Mr. Mansen to be endangered by the witchcraft of 7 other men in Upper Town.

These men, no kinsmen, were engaged in various enterprises of their own. One, who was notably wealthy, contracted for building work, a field in which Mr. Mansen himself then had an interest; this man could therefore be described as a business competitor. All were men who had received liberal hospitality from Mr. Mansen, and some, so he says, had received more tangible assistance from him. But, as he puts it, they were jealous of his own success.

The young prophet, it seems, said he was not strong enough, himself, to counter the threat. Instead, therefore, he took Mr. Mansen to the prophetess of his church at Eja. She confirmed the diagnosis, but, having prayed for Mr. Mansen under the crucifix, prophesied that his adversaries would soon meet with their deaths. Mr. Mansen claims that each of his opponents then came to an untimely end, and one of them confessed his guilt at the Musama Church before bringing about his own death.

In connection with witchcraft accusations outside the matrilineage, incidentally, J.B. Christensen has reported a belief among the Fante that, in order to harm a non-lineage-member, a witch has to trade victims with another witch belonging to his target's own lineage[1]. This belief has been noted among other Akan groups[2], but it was not encountered in Saltpond, where the efficacy of witchcraft sometimes to work beyond the lineage seemed to be fully accepted. M.J. Field, finding this latter situation to prevail among the Akyem, has interpreted it as a development from the "traditional" pattern, but it is difficult to be conclusive on this point[3].

4. Witchcraft diagnoses. Initial diagnoses in witchcraft cases are typically reached in a largely subjective manner, as some of the above cases indicate. Often, though, confirmation is sought from an external source. Both possession-priestesses (akɔmfo) and herbalists (ɛnunsifo; sing: ɔnunsinnyi) are thought to be able to discern whether a witch, or some other agent of misfortune, is involved, by virtue of their powers of divination. They can also, supposedly, detect the identity of an actual witch (c.f. Chap.7, p.217). Nowadays, too, African church prophets claim the same ability, arising from

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[1] Christensen 1954a:75; 1954b:397; 1959:275
[2] e.g. McCleod 1975:111; Bleek 1975:335
[3] Field 1948:185,n.1

their special "inspiration". Any one of these may be consulted by persons suspecting themselves to be under attack. (Chapter 10 will include an assessment of which of these is now the more popular; see pp.311-316). On the other hand, some self-suspecting victims simply draw their own conclusions.

A particular accusation, or even a confirmed diagnosis, is not necessarily accepted in all quarters. In the following case, a witchcraft accusation made by one of two parties to a dispute was rejected by the second:-

> Case 36. The death of Chief Officer James Kwame Peters.
> Chief Officer Peters, a young merchant naval officer from Upper Saltpond, died unexpectedly at the age of 27 while on board ship on a voyage across the Atlantic. At the request of his matrilineage, the body was brought home for burial in Saltpond. Six weeks later, the lineage held the customary rites and memorial service for the dead man, at which time a dispute erupted openly between themselves and the matrikin of his wife.
>
> C.O. Peters had been married for just over a year to a young woman whose own matrilineage was also resident in Upper Saltpond. She belonged to the same Establishment church as he. The couple had a child of only a few months, and there was therefore existent a "son" to assume the customary responsibilities at a death. It is the "traditional" duty of the children of the deceased to provide the coffin, the bedding, and the shroud; if the children themselves are still too young to assume this expenditure, the cost must be met by their own (and thus the wife's) matrilineage (c.f. Chap.3, p.88).
>
> In this instance, the representatives of the children's matrilineage made a public presentation, during the customary rites, of ¢60 (£20; 1973) for shroud and bedding, as well as the usual contribution of drink and cash (in this case, ¢21) towards the hospitality offered to guests. There and then, the deceased's lineage disputed the amount of the latter, but the townspeople to whom they appealed - representatives of the asafo company - ruled that this was sufficient return for the "reminder" of ¢2-10 which had been sent previously.
>
> On the following day, while sympathisers at the memorial service were still being entertained, an argument took place between members of the deceased's lineage and the head of the wife's lineage. The latter was now told to take his donation away, since - not including the cost of the coffin - it was inadequate. The lineage head retorted that since the coffin had already been provided by the government, in accordance with the deceased's terms of employment, no further contribution was necessary.
>
> There the matter rested, but the wife's lineage-kin then began to speak more freely the accusation which they had formerly been making among themselves, namely, that the young officer's death had been caused by his own mother's witchcraft.
>
> The outright argument after the memorial service had, in fact, been merely an open manifestation of a dispute between the two bodies of kin which had been simmering for some time. Well before the customary rites, representatives of the dead

man's lineage had approached the wife's lineage, demanding that the "children" meet the cost of transporting the body back across the Atlantic. They also asked that the "children" should pay for another coffin, a coffin of the most costly variety, which they regarded as commensurate with the dead man's naval rank. The wife's representative had repudiated his lineage's liability for shipping costs, saying that these had been incurred entirely on the other party's initiative, but had at first accepted responsibility for the coffin.

However, the tension between the two lineages had preceded even this event, arising before the death of the husband, and before the marriage itself. The wife's lineage attribute the whole train of events to the fact that the husband's father, a well-respected local man from a "Stool-Holding" matrilineage, who had once represented Saltpond as its Member of Parliament, had himself married a woman of lower social - or, as it has been termed here, "class" - status. Thus, they make out, the dead man's lineage do not possess the financial resources to fulfil their requirements in a style befitting the deceased's position.

By their account, moreover, the deceased's mother had from the start shown dislike and jealousy of the young wife, for coming from a "better" background than herself, and had made every effort, including resort to witchcraft and evil magic, to force the couple apart.

The dead man's lineage, on the other hand, accuse the wife's own mother of making trouble against the husband's mother.

Whatever the rights and wrongs in the case, it is indisputable that the last letter which the wife received from her husband before his death had announced that, for this last reason, they would for the moment cease to cohabit. This, then, is the context in which the accusation of witchcraft by the wife's lineage against the husband's mother was made.

There were to my knowledge no further developments, at least not before the end of the field period. However, the husband's lineage, who needless to say gave no credence to the above accusation, were making known quietly among their own supporters a fact which they had previously kept private. This was that the young officer had in fact died from natural causes, as a result of a brawl on board ship.

In this instance, confirmation of the witchcraft accusation had not been sought from any third source, at least not before the field period ended. If it had been, however, there is no reason to expect any closer agreement on the diagnosis between the two parties in the affair. Case 38 (p.302), for instance, shows a similar difference of opinion regarding the causes of a particular misfortune, even though a formal diagnosis had been given. In altercations such as these, accusations of witchcraft or other malpractice (such as the use of evil magic) are directed against opponents, who are unlikely to take the same view of the events in question. There is little which can induce them to do so.

5. Accretion of "Traditional" Witchcraft Belief and Christian Doctrine.

The preceding pages have discussed the "traditional" ideology of witchcraft in some depth, and also the way in which it typically finds expression in terms of concrete action. It is now necessary to emphasise that the ideology has, in some important respects, fallen under the influence of European - or, more specifically, Christian - patterns of thought.

From the earliest days of evangelisation in this area, missionaries sought Fante equivalents for their Christian terminology, and thus certain Fante and Christian religious concepts have tended to become identified with one another.

This point is relevant here because of the Fante terms chosen to represent the Biblical concept of "devil" and "demon", "evil spirit" and "unclean spirit"[1]. The last of these is invariably translated, word for word, as sunsum fi ("dirty spirit", an expression usually adopted, too, in place of "evil spirit"). Both "devil" and "demon", however, have been represented in the Fante Bible by the vernacular term abɔnsam, which, as mentioned earlier (pp.290-291), is more usually understood (like anyɛn) as "witch". Present-day English-speaking informants in Saltpond generally regard the three terms "devil", "demon" and "witch" as synonymous, and all three as appropriate translations for both abɔnsam and anyɛn.

On the other hand, they sometimes translate the term abɔnsam alternatively, into English, as "evil spirit" (this usage, in fact, is fully consistent with the interchangeability which the Bible itself allows, in places, between the expression "unclean spirit" and "devil"). Furthermore, these English-speaking informants insist that the beings they describe, in English, as either "evil spirit" or "witch" (or, in Fante, as abɔnsam and anyɛn) are identical.

This co-identification between these various agents of misfortune has important implications which will be brought out later in this chapter (pp.307-308), and, more fully, in the next (pp.317-321). Before this is

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[1] c.f. Debrunner 1959:1

attempted, however, it will be useful to discuss certain other agencies which, in this locality, are regarded as alternative possible causes of misfortune.

6. Alternative Explanations of Misfortune: Nature-gods and the Dead, etc. Witchcraft is not cited as the cause of every misfortune, even in situations where it might seem to the outside observer to be particularly appropriate. As mentioned previously (p.287), there are thought to be alternative causal agents, such as, most notably, the nature-gods (abosom) and the spirits of deceased ancestors (nananom). These, in some circumstances, provide more acceptable explanations.

In Case 37, for instance, the mishap in question was, supposedly, caused by one of the local nature-gods. As explained in Chapter 8 (pp.240-241), a multitude of such gods are believed to exist, some regarded as of too minor importance to warrant regular attention from the community, others suffering from neglect, and perhaps yet more whose identities have never become known. Nature-deities are regarded as unpredictable, if not wholly malicious, and, it being virtually inevitable that many of the lesser among them will remain unpropitiated, mischief may well be inflicted by them. (It can often appear, though, from informants' statements, that the damage is thought to arise from the consequent failure of the gods to act, rather than from any more positive deed on their part; c.f. Case 39, pp.305). In the case quoted below, however, the misfortune came about, supposedly, because of a definite offence committed by the victim:-

> Case 37. Kwesi, the child "caught" by the nature-god. One day, shortly before the field period opened, Kwesi, a small boy from primary school, was returning homewards, with his schoolmates, along a path which leads through the grove of Nana Bonzɔɔdu, one of the Upper Town local deities (see Fig.8.1, p.239).
>
> According to women living in the immediate vicinity, the children began swinging themselves on the creepers which hang from the tree where the deity is believed to live. At this, Nana Bonzɔɔdu's priestess, it is said, came out of her house nearby, and rebuked the children, telling them to treat the god with respect.
>
> Most of the children, it seems, obeyed her. Kwesi, however, who had climbed high into the tree, found himself quite unable to get down. As the informants put it:
>
> "Suddenly, the bosom took him up into the tree, and wouldn't release him."

So there poor Kwesi remained, while his friends went to find his parents. They, when they heard of his plight, came to the spot to make representations to the priestess. But, as the tale is told:

"The bosom would not let the boy go, until they had brought the priestess some drink, and she had poured a libation at the tree."

Case 38, which is given next, provides an example of a misfortune attributed, at least in some quarters, to the vengeance of the ancestral spirits. More will be said about the nature of these beings shortly (pp.304-305). Here, it should be noted that Case 38 is another in which the interpretation reached by one party was not accepted by the other (c.f. Case 36, p.298):-

Case 38. The death of Nana Nyimpa VI[1]. Shortly before this research began, the death took place of Nana Nyimpa VI, a recognised Stool-Holder of Upper Saltpond. Nyimpa VI had further enjoyed the support of one faction of the town in a claim to the Upper Town Chiefship, as also had his predecessor upon his Stool, his mother's brother, Nyimpa V. Neither, however, had been properly installed, their claim being disputed by another faction (c.f. Chap.4, pp.105-106).

Nyimpa VI's death came as the conclusion of a particularly unpleasant and protracted period of incapacity, which had followed a sudden stroke. This event was attributed by his sons (sons being a Stool-Holder's natural supporters) to evil medicine (edur) obtained from a herbalist (onunsinnyi) by the people of Low Town.

Nyimpa VI's sons explained the background to their accusation in terms of the dispute with Low Town over the ownership of the area of land known as Obiripa. This is the same issue that once provoked hostilities between the Upper Town and Low Town asafo companies (see Case 30, Chap.8, pp.280-281).

The land adjoins the beach to the immediate west of the Atufa Lagoon. This latter is generally regarded as the boundary between the Upper Town and the Low Town territories, and all parties agree that the plot in question originally comprised part of the Stool Lands of Nyimpa VI's matrilineage. His sons relate the subsequent history in the following manner.

Nearly 30 years previously, they say, his predecessor, Nyimpa V, granted the land to an Inspector of Police who was temporarily resident in Saltpond, allowing him, by their version, rights of usufruct only. On this land, the police inspector planted coconut trees. When, later, his secondment to the town came to an end, and he moved elsewhere, he is said to have made his coconut farm over to the then Chief of Low Town, as an act of friendship. Thereafter, the Low Town Chief apparently claimed that the gift had transferred rights of absolute ownership.

This claim soon provoked the active confrontation between the two communities which was to continue for some years. Eventually Nyimpa VI, after his accession early in 1970, entered into litigation over the affair. According to his sons, it was when actually on his way to court that he collapsed with the stroke that so impaired his faculties.

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[1] pseudonym

As he lay on his sick-bed, his sons sought a diagnosis of his condition from a well-known herbalist in a nearby village. One of the sons still relates how he heard the herbalist's spiritual helpers (his mbowatsia, or "little people") speak aloud, explaining how the people of Low Town brought about the calamity with evil magic, and avowing that the Stool-Holder would ultimately die. At the time of the research, the aforeseen death had recently occurred. The court case was being pursued by the newly installed Nyimpa VII, and his predecessor's sons were expressing fears for his safety.

The above interpretation was not accepted by all strands of opinion, in spite of the confirmation provided by the herbalist. A quite different version of the event was put forward by members of the faction which had opposed the claim of Nyimpa V and Nyimpa VI to the Upper Saltpond Chiefship. These latter made a connection between Nyimpa VI's misfortune and his own behaviour, alleging that he, superseding the matrilineal heir actually named by Nyimpa V, had "forced himself upon the Stool".

More dispassionate informants explain that the elders of the matrilineage, when unexpectedly faced with an exceptionally wealthy candidate newly arrived from Europe, had quite properly judged that the very young and more distantly related heir named by the dead Stool-Holder should wait, and acquire more experience.

Thus Nyimpa VI won the Stool, but once in possession, according to his factional opponents, he behaved in a manner such as to "bring the Stool into disrepute", taking long periods of absence, and, with virtually no notice, failing to hold the annual Stool Festivals. This, they say, provoked differences with his lineage-kin, and aroused the anger of the lineage ancestors, who reacted by inflicting upon Nyimpa VI the punishment of a particularly disagreeable illness and death.

Thereafter, the young heir was allowed to accede, and was occupying the Stool as Nyimpa VII during the field period.

In this instance, no suggestion was ever heard to the effect that witchcraft might have been involved in the misfortune, even though the intra-lineage jealousies surrounding the succession could appear to exemplify a classic witchcraft situation. Contacts in Low Town were, unfortunately, not sufficiently intimate for their particular version of events to be obtained. The young Nyimpa VII and his matrikin likewise kept their own counsel. It is perhaps relevant here that Nyimpa VII appeared to be, for the moment at least, universally popular in Upper Town. While retaining the good favour of his predecessor's faction, he had also been allying himself with the supporters of the newly installed Upper Saltpond Chief, the Stool-Holder of another matrilineage.

It is conceivable, in disputed cases such as this, that the most widely acceptable version of events may change over time, as new factions rise into prominence. The cause to which misfortune is attributed has no objective reality, which, capable of external verification, can be perceived by everybody. This whole explanatory system is best regarded as providing

subjective statements of shifting circumstances and alliances.

While on the subject of these alternative causes of misfortune, it is appropriate to specify, more clearly than before, the difference between the "evil spirit" (ábɔ́nsam) - or, as it is usually understood, the "witch" - and certain other entities with which it could, perhaps, be confused.

One point to note is that although a "witch" (ányɛn or ábɔ́nsam) is often an identifiable human person, misfortunes are sometimes attributed to "evil spirits" (pl: mbɔ́nsam) whose origin is, for the most part, undisclosed, and whose activities are believed to threaten a particular vicinity. These should not however be understood as locality spirits, or as forces emanating from the natural environment. Beings of the latter kind are certainly acknowledged, and are thought to be potentially dangerous, if not deliberately malicious. However, they fall within the category of nature-deities (ábɔ́som) already described (see above, p.301, and Chap.7, pp.214-218,222-224). They belong, therefore, in a different group from these unpersonalised "evil spirits".

This same category of "evil spirits" (mbɔ́nsam) needs also, probably, to be distinguished from that of the "spirits of the dead" (ɛ́wùákɔ́r: "the dead and gone"). The dead are on the whole not malevolent, the ancestral spirits, at least, being protective rather than vindictive towards those of their descendants whom they approve. Nevertheless, they are always approached with caution. Like the nature-deities, the dead are regarded as a potential danger when they gather very near the house, as they are believed to do on certain occasions, such as funerals. The subject of spirits of the dead really deserves more attention than could be devoted to it during the present research, when no informants were found who were eager to give a very systematic treatment of the topic. Therefore it remained uncertain whether the category of the dead was conceived as consisting entirely of lineage ancestors (nananom; sing: nana: "grandfather"), or whether it was thought also to include unaffiliated spirits. Be that as it may, several informants feared that, among the dead, there might number some spirits who had retained all

the evil inclinations which had ruled their previous lifetimes. Whether, though, any overlap is recognised between the dead of this inclination, and the so-called "evil spirits", again remained unclear. Informants had generally not found it necessary, or relevant, to pursue distinctions of this kind.

Both spirits of the dead, and any nearby nature-deities, are accorded regular ritual attention by prudent townspeople in order to secure their good offices. This is effected by pouring them a libation in the course of special events, for instance, at Christmas, or at funerals. Libations are also poured on the occasion of any change in the circumstances of near kin, or closely-associated acquaintances, and they are often repeated in the event of sudden mishap. Some people claim to pour a libation daily. Libations are, however, usually presented with no great ceremony. The following case describes the typical manner in which these rituals are conducted, and illustrates the relationship which is widely understood to exist between the dead, the nature-gods, and the so-called "evil spirits":-

> Case 39. Mr. Appiah's motor accident. Mr. Appiah, a university graduate aged 38 who is active in one of the Pentecostal churches, is a senior civil servant working in Saltpond. Although not a native of the place, he is nevertheless Fante (deriving from the town of Apam) and he has distant relatives here.
>
> It happened, during the field period, that one of Mr. Appiah's colleagues, a rather older man, left the town on transfer. Mr. Appiah was therefore able to move, with his wife and children, into the superior house which the other had vacated. On the day the move took place, Mr. Appiah called in Mr. Mansen (Case 7, Chap.6, p.180), an elderly Saltpond man distantly related to him through his father. Presenting Mr. Mansen with a bottle of drink, he asked the latter to pour a libation on his behalf "to the gods and ghosts" (abɔsom and ewuakɔr). He explained his action thus:
>
> > "Somebody who lived here before may have had an evil spirit (abɔnsam). The libation is to make sure it does us no harm."
>
> Mr. Mansen went to the door of the house and, removing one foot from its sandal, poured the libation. As he did so, he called upon Mr. Appiah's ancestors, and his own ancestors, and any nature-deities (abɔsom) in the vicinity of the new house, asking them to protect Mr. Appiah, so that he came to no harm. The two men then sat down to finish the bottle between them, and spent the rest of the afternoon in a convivial manner.
>
> Scarcely more than a month later, Mr. Appiah came close to a serious motor accident along the drive-way to his house when, the steering suddenly failing, his car left the road

> and plunged down the steep side of a hill. Luckily, the car's passage was checked by brushwood; Mr. Appiah emerged, severely shaken, but unhurt. He attributed the accident to the activity of evil spirits (mbɔnsam) around the house.
>
> When, not long after, sympathisers began to collect at the house, Mr. Mansen, who was quickly among them, was asked to repeat his libation. This he did, reproaching the gods and ancestors for neglecting his previous request, and asking them not to neglect the request again.

Thus, as this discussion shows, there are a variety of agents from which misfortune is thought to arise. Why one should be cited rather than another, it is difficult to say, at least with the information available at present. It seems probable, though, that the kind of explanation accepted varies according to the social situation of each person or faction involved in the affair. Different possible interpretations appear to carry different normative connotations. Therefore, a different cause is likely to be cited to explain misfortune besetting, for instance, an ally, than one afflicting an opponent. The complete explanatory system would appear to be a kind of language, which expresses, not only the state of the relationship of the accused to the victim, but also the relationship of the accuser to both the accused and the victim. However, more intensive research on the subject would be needed in order to arrive at any firm conclusion on the matter.

Moreover, in spite of this digression from the main theme of the chapter, it remains the case that the threat with which people in Saltpond are chiefly preoccupied is the danger of witchcraft. From this point, therefore, the discussion will proceed in terms of witchcraft alone.

7. The Churches' Attitude Towards Belief in Witchcraft. The treatment of witchcraft ideology should not be concluded without mention of the attitude of the Christian churches to these beliefs.

It has already been mentioned (p.300) that the early missionaries drew upon indigenous concepts of this nature in order to impart their own teachings to the Fante population. Today, though, many people in Saltpond, both within the churches and outside, feel that the Establishment churches, at any rate,

offer no clear message on the subject. As H.W. Debrunner has remarked[1], the teaching in churches of this type has all along been marked by its ambivalence, tending to deny the reality of witchcraft, while at the same time proclaiming the power of Christ to overcome all dangers. Similar views are repeated in the churches locally.

For instance, during one sermon preached in an Establishment church in the town, the congregation was assured that many of the misfortunes which become attributed to witchcraft are, in fact, the direct result of natural causes (examples cited were road accidents caused by inadequate maintenance, and epidemics arising from poor hygiene). But other mishaps the minister acknowledged to be beyond human understanding; there are, he affirmed, many centres of evil which can cause these events, but God, he asserted, strives constantly against them. He urged his listeners to seek strength to face such dangers through faith in God, and justified his argument by reference to the Biblical text:

> "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil (abɔnsam)." (Ephesians 6:11)

The tone of this advice is typical of Establishment church teaching, but many among the congregations find it inadequate in times of real adversity. Then, as cases both above and in the following chapter reveal, many Establishment church members resort to more immediate measures. Members of at least some of the Pentecostal churches often do likewise, in spite of the healing services available in their own organisations.

Practices believed to counter the effects of witchcraft, and the special powers attributed to those who work them, will be described more fully in Chapter 10. Among the foremost counter-agents, though, now rank the African churches. As will be demonstrated shortly (pp.317-321), these openly acknowledge the existence of witches, and practise specific techniques to deal with them.

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[1] Debrunner 1959:135-136.

8. The Durability of Witchcraft Belief. The present chapter has clearly demonstrated that witchcraft beliefs are still accepted in contemporary Saltpond, by both native members of the town, and immigrants. These beliefs, moreover, manifest themselves in accusations of witchcraft directed against antagonists in particular instances.

It has also been shown how a process has taken place whereby indigenous notions of the "witch" have become identified with certain Christian concepts regarding "evil spirits".

Witchcraft beliefs have probably proved so durable because, as the preceding pages have indicated, they are firmly rooted in the system of kinship organisation, which, in this locality, is based on matrilineal descent. As Chapter 3 has shown (pp.85-86), the matrilineal kinship system, although under threat, is to a large extent still holding its ground. Witchcraft beliefs and accusations, in contemporary times, may be related both to the continuing ideal of cohesion within the matrilineal group, and to the disruptions by which the group is increasingly beset.

On the other hand, the widening of witchcraft ideology to take in the feasibility of witchcraft attacks by non-lineage-members covers the increasing interaction which Saltpond people now have with non-kinsmen. It also provides for the situation of the growing number of people who, as immigrants to the town, are living with strangers, apart from their own kin.

The co-identification of the Fante "witch" and the Biblical "evil spirit" allows the indigenous beliefs, with their important social significance, to be retained by Christians. Thus even highly educated people of high "class" status, and active members of Establishment churches, confess to these beliefs without embarrassment.

Establishment churches officially decry the indigenous beliefs. African churches, however, making use of the identification between the indigenous "witch" and the Biblical "evil spirit", take a very different view. This will be discussed in the following chapter (pp.317-321), which deals

principally with sickness, and the different measures which may be taken to cure it. These are, in effect, the different measures which are available to counter the damage done by witchcraft.

Chapter 10. SICKNESS AND HEALING: NATURE-GOD CULTS AND AFRICAN CHURCHES.

In the preceding pages, the topic of misfortune has arisen in several contexts, and the different counter-measures offered within local culture have also been briefly reviewed (Chap.7, pp.233-234). It will be the task of the present chapter to look directly at these various agencies which, supposedly, counter misfortune. It will firstly be shown how individuals choose between their various options, a choice partly dependent upon the interpretation they place upon their affliction. Subsequently, the relative popularity of the different counter-agencies will be assessed.

Misfortune can of course take a variety of forms, but local attention centres most particularly upon sickness, and the associated risk of death. Sickness, therefore, will be the main concern here, though the discussion will apply, in part, to other kinds of mishap. The discussion will lead to a more detailed consideration than has yet been undertaken of the healing activities of the African churches.

1. Sickness. At the time of this research, the modern theories of disease accepted in Western medical practice were little understood by most people in the town. Nevertheless, townspeople generally recognised a category of "hospital sicknesses", falling within the expertise of the hospital doctors. Contrasted with these are the "spiritual sicknesses", believed to be caused by the activity of the beings usually referred to by English-speaking informants as "evil spirits", or in Fante as mbɔnsam (c.f. Chap.9, p.287). These ailments are considered to be outside the doctors' province.

Examples cited most often as typical of "spiritual sicknesses" are severe headaches, or otherwise stomach upsets and manifestations of insanity, but ultimately any ailment might be regarded in this light. Many informants explain the distinction as follows: a "hospital sickness", they say, is any complaint which responds to hospital treatment; a "spiritual sickness", on the other hand, is one which fails so to respond, and which can therefore only be alleviated by ritual treatment.

In any particular case of sickness, the first decision to be made is whether treatment is likely to be most effective by hospital or ritual methods. There is no single way in which this decision is reached. Sometimes the nature of the sickness itself suggests the answer. For instance, a headache or some form of mental disorientation may be immediately interpreted as having a "spiritual" cause, and therefore requiring ritual treatment. Even more clearly, a broken bone calls for orthopaedic treatment, though this may be sought not only from a doctor, but equally from any herbalist (onunsinnyi) who possesses the skill of bone-setting (c.f. Chap.7, p.233). Alternatively, in cases where the diagnosis of "spiritual" as opposed to "hospital" sickness is not at once apparent, a process of trial and error can be adopted. The hospital is perhaps consulted first, but, if this proves unsuccessful, causation is then attributed elsewhere and other measures are taken. Conversely, certain patients may consult a ritual practitioner from the start. Among the latter, some claim to refer on to the hospital a - strictly limited - number of specific ailments which they recognise as requiring surgical treatment. Non-medical forms of misfortune can, of course, only be countered by ritual action.

Thus, for one reason or another, certain instances of sickness and other misfortune come to be attributed to "spiritual" causes. As the previous chapter has shown (pp.287,291,300), the "evil spirits" that supposedly bring about these mishaps are nothing less than "witches" (mbɔnsam or anyɛnfo), or, as they might be better termed, "witch-spirits"[1]. This present chapter will therefore be concerned primarily with measures to counter the effects of witchcraft.

2. Counter-measures for Witchcraft. It is generally understood in the town that those who believe themselves to be threatened by witchcraft attacks have a choice between two main courses of action. Firstly, they can consult a possession-priestess (ɔkɔmfo), offer a libation - or in serious cases, a sacrifice - to her deities (abosom), and receive medicine (edur) for the remedy of their complaints. (Some informants, though, claim to prefer the

[1] c.f. Debrunner 1959:52.

herbalist (onunsinnyi), whose knowledge of medicines they regard as more profound.) Alternatively, they can go to an African church, where treatment is believed to be effected by the power of prayer.

Different individuals make different choices between these options. Moreover, the same individual may choose differently at different times. Many of the case studies already given indicate the type of counter-agency which was then preferred (see especially Cases 33, p.293; 34, p.295; 37, p.301; 38, p.302; 39, p.305), but this point is further illustrated by the following examples:-

> Case 40. The collapse of Araba Kakraba. Araba Kakraba, a young single woman aged 18 with middle-school education, lives in a lineage-owned house in Kuranchikrom, Upper Saltpond, together with her mother and certain other relatives. She had not been an actively committed member of any church. The following narrative was given in her presence, on the morning after the main events occurred, by the (female) pastor of the Musama Disco Christo Church (Case 23, Chap.6, p.203), the girl being at the time too weak to say much herself.
>
> By the pastor's account, Araba, complaining of toothache, had suddenly collapsed the evening before. Her mother, apparently, had tried to persuade her to drink some milk and "kenkey-water", but had failed to revive her. So she had run instead to the Musama Church, conveniently nearby, and summoned the pastor, reporting that her daughter was dying.
>
> When the pastor reached the house, she found the girl lying in a state of breathlessness, conscious but seemingly unaware of her surroundings. She was still unable to eat or drink. The pastor confesses to having been uncertain what action to take:
>
> "So I prayed, and then I sang, and I did this five times."
>
> At this point, it is reported, Araba revived, said she was hungry, and accepted the milk and kenkey. The pastor prayed and sang a sixth and seventh time, and the girl was then able to get up and walk to the church compound. There they were encountered the following morning, Araba still resting after her ordeal.
>
> According to the pastor, the girl had been telling her, since her arrival at the church, that during her collapse she had in fact been dreaming. In her dream, she apparently saw a group of people enter her room. She saw one of these, a woman whom she could identify, put a hand inside her vagina and take out her womb. Then, she had reported, she felt a sharp pain, and her heart began beating wildly.
>
> "These people were devils," explained the pastor. "They were anyɛn. They were abɔnsam."
>
> Removal of the womb in spirit would cause, if not death itself, then certainly infertility.
>
> As the story then goes, when the pastor continued praying, Araba in her dream saw her adversaries move away from her. In this instance, unfortunately, the identity of the attacker was not disclosed.

Case 41. A case of infertility. Mrs. Jessica Acquaah, a primary school teacher aged about 30, is one of a group of full sisters who take pride, like both their parents (now deceased), in their long-standing attachment to the Methodist Church (see Case 13, Chap.6, p. 184). Their Stool-Holding matrilineage is noted in Upper Town for producing women who, though themselves of great vigour, are not prolifically fertile. Witchcraft cases are not unknown within the lineage, though in the present instance no specific person was ever apparently accused.

Nevertheless, when Mrs. Acquaah married some few years before this research, she for some while showed no sign of conceiving. According to her husband, the problem was discussed with her sisters and her mother (who was still then living). These latter being - as core members of one of the most influential of the Stool-Holding lineages - closely in touch with the "traditional" affairs of Upper Saltpond, it was eventually decided that supplication ought to be made to Nana Eku, the tutelary deity (bosom) of the community. Nana Eku is widely believed locally to possess strong powers in this respect (c.f. Chap.7, pp.218,223).

This presented a new difficulty, for Mrs. Acquaah, being a conscientiously active church member, could not approach the "traditional" nature-gods herself, nor, for the same reason, could her husband, her sisters, or her mother. However the husband finally recalled to mind a distant "uncle" of his, who had remained animist in religion. The uncle was provided with the necessary sum of money, together with a bottle of gin for the libation, and despatched to Ɔkɔmfo Anan, priestess of Nana Eku. Not long afterwards, Mrs. Acquaah conceived her first child, who, when born, was given the name of Eku after the deity who had sent him. The god was later sent a sheep as a thank-offering, via the same intermediary.

Case 42. Mrs. Nsame's baby. Mrs. Christianah Nsame, a young Upper Town woman, aged 20 and educated to middle-school level, is now, like her illiterate mother, a member of one of the Pentecostal churches in Saltpond (see Case 18, Chap.6, p.192). In this she is fairly active, attending intermittently. She is very recently divorced, and has a child a few months old.

Mrs. Nsame reports that while she was pregnant, she was taken by her mother to consult Ɔkɔmfo Efua Ata, one of the Low Town possession-priestesses (Case 24, Chap.7, p.225). This was regarded as a sensible routine precaution in order to ensure a safe delivery, unborn children being thought to be especially vulnerable to attack by witchcraft, and other unspecified evil influences. The priestess in question has a considerable reputation locally in matters of this kind, and had been consulted by several of Mrs. Nsame's friends who were similarly circumstanced.

According to Mrs. Nsame and her mother, on their first visit, when she was 7 months pregnant, they took the priestess ¢3 in cash (approximately £1-00; 1973), and some old silver coins. These were mingled in water with some medicine produced by the priestess, and left to stand.

Mrs. Nsame returned to the priestess three days' later, alone, At this point her story is of necessity uncorroborated, though not dissimilar to statements of other young women. This is her own account of her experiences:-

"Nana Efua Ata took me to her house where the gods come to. I sat on a stool, and she poured some drink before my feet, and then stood behind me. Then Ekua Tsiɛ[1] spoke. I heard her tell Nana Efua Ata to bathe me, and she did this with the water she had prepared before. I was then standing naked. Then Nana Efua Ata spoke to the child inside my womb, and I heard him answer. She asked him when he would come, but he would not say exactly. She asked him if he was a boy or a girl, and he said he did not know, but Nana said that from his speech he must be a boy. He then said he wanted to be left alone to prepare himself, and promised to come without trouble. It was a very wonderful thing."

Mrs. Nsame then waited for her delivery, but by the time the expected date had approached and passed, she was growing anxious. In the meantime, she had been experiencing problems in her marriage, for, as her version goes, her husband was then having an affair with another married woman. The aggrieved husband, she says, came to her and swore to use medicine (edur) to kill him, whereas the other wife repeatedly squabbled with her in public places. Mrs. Nsame became frightened, fearing, she says, that these hostile influences might do harm to herself and her child. She therefore left her husband's house for that of her mother's brother, declaring her wish for a divorce.

Several of the women in her maternal uncle's house (Mrs. Nsame's matrilineal aunts and cousins), though themselves nominal members of either the Catholic or Methodist Churches, used sometimes to attend services of the Church of the Lord, an African church which was next door. Mrs. Nsame took to accompanying them, and on one occasion, she reports, the Prophet had an inspiration that the unborn child required protection. Although Mrs. Nsame could have received prayer-healing from her own Pentecostal-type church, on his instructions, olive oil was sent for, and this was applied to Mrs. Nsame's abdomen to ensure the safety of the child. Still, though, the baby did not arrive.

Thus situated, Mrs. Nsame went back to Low Town to see Ɔkɔmfo Efua Ata. The same procedure was followed as before, but this time:-

"Nana asked my baby why he did not come, and in reply he told her about the trouble between me and my husband. He said that he only wanted peace, and promised to come if his parents could agree. Then Nana asked Ekua Tsiɛ[1] what she should do to make the baby come, and Ekua Tsiɛ told her to take water from the lagoon where Nana Atufa lives, put in money and medicine, and use it to bathe me with. So Nana did this, and also gave me some of the medicine to drink. My baby came exactly one week later, and he was a fine boy."

Shortly afterwards, Mrs. Nsame's marriage was formally dissolved and her wedding-ring returned to her husband. She herself continued to live in her mother's brother's house.

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[1] Ekua Tsiɛ: the priestess's principal deity.

The above case illustrates how recourse may be sought through both the available channels in a single instance. In this latter case, it was the possession-priestess who, when events reached their climax, proved the more helpful. Nevertheless, Mrs. Nsame does not regard the priestess as necessarily the more effective source of help in time of difficulty, as the continuation of the story shows:-

> Case 42. Mrs. Nsame's baby (continued). Mrs. Nsame, as has been said, delivered her baby safely, but once he was born, he disturbed her every night with his severe crying. She discussed his case with her relatives in the house, and, she says, on the advice of her mother's brother (himself an active Catholic) took the child to the same Church of the Lord prophet who had given her treatment during her pregnancy.
>
> The Prophet laid his hands on the child and prayed, and, as Mrs. Nsame testified later, when her uncle asked her the next morning whether the baby had cried in the night, she had been able to reply in the negative.
>
> "These things can be caused by evil spirits, by mbɔnsam," commented the Prophet himself, on hearing the tale repeated yet again. "But," he went on, "healing is done by the power of God through faith."
>
> From this point, the child gave less cause for concern, and, when he was about 6 months old (some time after the above history had been recorded), he was taken by Mrs. Nsame's mother, who was expected to have more time than herself to devote to his care, back with her to her work-place in Ashanti Region.
>
> Not long after, Mrs. Nsame encountered Ɔkɔmfo Efua Ata, the possession-priestess from Low Town, in the presence of the writer. She was advised by the priestess to bring the baby to her, so that another ritual might be performed for him beside the lagoon. But Mrs. Nsame now showed no urgency to accede to this request, promising only to bring the child if he should come back to Saltpond.
>
> "Maybe," she said privately afterwards, "we will bring him to her if he falls sick."

The examples given here and in the previous chapter indicate that, in the early 1970s, opinion in the town was still divided as to whether either of the principal agencies for the treatment of witchcraft-induced conditions - namely: possession-priestesses (akɔmfo), or African (popularly termed "spiritual") churches - would invariably prove most effective. Many people, it has been shown, choose between the two, as their particular cases progress, largely on empirical grounds.

Certain other informants were encountered during the research who were able to articulate more general criteria for judging between one form of ritual and another. All these were agreed that what really matters are the special powers possessed by the ritual practitioner. Specifically, he or she, in order to be effective against witchcraft, as either prophet or priestess, must be him- or herself a witch (anyɛn or ɔbɔnsam). Mr. Opoku (c.f. above, pp.212-213; 222; 289-290; also Case 6, Chap.6, p.174) put it thus:-

"They have got to be anyɛn. Only anyɛn can see other anyɛn."

Mr. Mansen (c.f. above, p.223; 290-291; also Case 7, Chap.6, p.180), though an active Methodist, took the subject further:

> "You can't just say whether the akɔmfo or spiritual churches are better," he said. "They are all different. Many akɔmfo are not at all anyɛn, but the stronger ones are, and then they are better than many spiritual churches."

But he concluded his statement with his own judgement to the effect that:

> "There is nothing better than the Musama Church or the Twelve Apostles. Their workers have really got witchcraft, so they can see witchcraft in other people."

Although not everybody would follow Mr. Mansen's preferences in respect of particular African churches, his comment reflects in general terms a feeling which appears to have been developing among the townspeople. This is that, strictly with other things equal, African churches may have the edge over possession-priestesses in providing treatment for "spiritual" complaints. The African churches have now become so important, in providing counter-measures to witchcraft, that the whole question of the significance of this phenomenon within them warrants special discussion in the closing sections of the chapter.

3. Witchcraft, Healing and the African Churches. In attaining this place in local ideology as perhaps the most effective counter-agency to witchcraft, the African churches have drawn their inspiration from Biblical passages concerning the exorcism of devils and evil or unclean spirits. As shown earlier (Chap.9, p.300), these became identified with witches by virtue of the translators' adoption of the Fante term meaning "witch" (abɔnsam) in place of "evil spirit", "devil" and "demon".

Modern theologians of Establishment churches, now finding this result unfortunate, have tried to disseminate their view of the essential difference in the Akan concept of the witch as capable of - even intent upon - harming others[1]. Nevertheless, the weight of popular opinion retains the former perspective.

Accordingly, all African churches focus attention upon "devils" and "evil spirits", and within some the topic has become a major preoccupation. One local prophet, for example, the head of the Life and Salvation Church, an extensive organisation covering many parts of Ghana, has composed a long treatise in the English language entitled "The Work of Demons and the Grounds for Deliverence". In this he affirms:-

> "The scripture shows clearly that there is a world of spirit beings. They are called demons, devils or evil spirits ..... They are too many in kinds. The Bible also reveals the fact that these demon spirits have access to men, and that their presence brings about many kinds of troubles and sicknesses, diseases, insanity and lawlessness.
>
> "..... There are many diseases of which the doctors known nothing about. They do not know the cause, neither do they know the cure. Most of these diseases are caused by the actual presence of demons and only through the power of God can they be driven out[2]."

The author then cites a large number of Biblical texts referring to the casting out of evil spirits by Christ and his apostles, and concludes:-

> "Approach God through Prophet Prah's Ministry for any help. Prophet Prah has special gift for spiritual protection ..... Approach Prophet Prah's Ministry for help without charge, but promise and offerings - Amen[3]."

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[1] Debrunner 1959:1,145-146

[2] Prah, n.d., unpub. ms. (3):2

[3] ibid:9,24.

Supplicants to African churches can, as previous case studies have shown (see e.g. Case 19, Chap.6, p.200; Case 33, Chap.9, p.293), bear one of two relationships to the churches. They may either participate within it regularly for the sake of continuing protection, or they may approach it specifically in the event of a particular affliction. Personal histories show that many adherents of the former type first went to their churches with particular complaints, and subsequently remained within the organisations for protection, but this depth of commitment does not invariably result. Other histories, of persons outside the churches, show the supplicant approaching a church once, or perhaps several times, during his lifetime, but neglecting it when circumstances are favourable. Little difference was discerned in the beliefs of those taking one part rather than the other. It seems probable that one set of factors determines the action people take in the event of a misfortune, and another quite different set determines regular church participation. Elsewhere it is suggested that the latter is largely associated with connotations of "class" status (see Chap.6, pp.199,207).

The "spiritual sicknesses" with which supplicants believe themselves to be afflicted are, as shown earlier, thought to be due to the activity of "evil" or "witch" spirits (mbɔnsam, otherwise anyɛn). A further distinction needs to be made, at this point, between sicknesses that, supposedly, have actually been inflicted upon the sufferer by witches - by adversaries external to himself - , and other disturbances that may arise from the belief that the complainant is himself a witch.

Cases of the latter variety were difficult to document, this being of course a damaging admission to allow. It appeared, though, that certain of the African churches made something of a speciality in affairs of this kind, and their leaders were usually very ready to supply explanations and details of case histories. These latter, needless to say, were the very narratives which the prophets made use of to vindicate their own positions, and since

little corroboration was possible, they will not be repeated here. However the explanatory content of the prophets' statements warrants further discussion, illustrating, as it does, the churches' ideologies in respect of this problem, and their procedures for countering it.

As indicated earlier (p.316), it is popularly believed that, to be effective, a prophet should possess the power to "see" witchcraft, and thus to identify a witch. Certain prophets in the town professed to this ability unprompted, and all who were asked directly made the same claim. At the Twelve Apostles' Church in Low Town, one of those groups in which special emphasis was given to the need to neutralise practising witches, the Prophet explained:-

> "The sick people here have evil spirits (mbɔnsam). I can see these evil spirits, but I will never tell them. I wait for them to confess. When they confess, the healing can begin."

This church practises special techniques intended to induce confessions. Among the most notable of these is one of its applications of the "Holy Water" which plays so great a part in its public ritual (c.f. Chap.6, pp.196-198), for, according to its Prophet, no person having an "evil" or "witch" spirit (abɔnsam) can drink the water without that spirit "showing" itself. "Holy Water" is therefore frequently offered to suspected persons, both during church services and in private. The Prophet is able to narrate numerous instances of such confessions. Sometimes, by his account, a man or woman confessing to be a witch (anyɛn) will also name other people with whom he "goes at night" to do his work. In these cases, he says, the accused persons are likely to come to the church to deny the allegation, but they are not freed from suspicion until they have spent several days at the church undergoing the various tests. The Prophet implies that more confessions usually result from this procedure. Such events, if the Prophet's version is to be believed, have at times caused considerable altercation within the relatively encapsulated community of Lower Saltpond. However, there appeared to be no such occurrences on any large scale during the field period. One case was

observed of a young woman who, apparently severely deranged and living under restraint in the church compound, was said to have recently confessed to being a witch, but she herself was too incoherent in speech to provide any corroboration.

Although the other churches would undoubtedly deal with the eventuality of a self-confessed witch presenting him- or herself within their midst, none emphasised this aspect of their work to the same extent as the Twelve Apostles'. Nearest to it, perhaps, was the somewhat peripheral Life and Salvation Church. Here on one occasion, following the preaching of the Biblical text:-

> "And I will cut off witchcrafts (mbɔnsansɛm) out of thine hand: and thou shalt have no more soothsayers" (Micah 5:12),

reputed witches were seen by the writer to be exorcised in scenes of mass spirit-possession. An assistant pastor of the church explained what was taking place by reference to the Biblical verses I John 4:2-3, which read:-

> "Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God.
> "And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of 'anti-christ', whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world."

Elsewhere, more attention seemed to be paid to those supposedly suffering from other peoples' witchcraft, than to those initiating it. Nevertheless, it was widely believed by non-members of these churches that the active participants were predominantly persons who, but for their church activity, would be practising witches. As one informant, a teacher at the Methodist School, put it:

> "People who have strong spirits can use them either for good or evil."

Many of the leaders of the African - or, colloquially, the "spiritual" - churches would acknowledge this as valid. After all, they too, according to local ideology, must of necessity possess the power of witchcraft in order

to accomplish their work, since "only anyɛn can see other anyɛn" (p.316). They themselves claim, however, that their own adherents are rendered harmless, and in their view the greatest danger at the present time derives from members of the Establishment churches, subject to no controls. As the Prophet of the Twelve Apostles' Church alleged:-

> "Many people who are witches (anyɛn) just stay away from the spiritual churches. All the other churches are full of witches, but these people dare not come into the spiritual churches."

Thus the subject of "evil" or "witch" spirits is an important concern within all the African churches in the town, though receiving perhaps rather more emphasis in some than in others. Among the leaders of these churches, there remains a measure of disagreement as to whether all sicknesses are caused by such spirits, or only some. The Prophet at the Church of the Lord, for instance, preaches the widely-held view that a "spiritual" sickness is of a different type from those others which respond to hospital treatment. The Musama Church, on the other hand, insists that every sickness is caused by an "evil spirit" or "devil" (c.f. below, p.323), and members are taught that medical treatment should be abjured. (A proviso, however, allows that "Providential agencies ..... when deemed necessary, shall not be refused[1].")

There is uncertainty among the African church leaders on the subject of the source from which these (so-called) "evil spirits" emanate. The Church of the Lord Prophet, apparently at a loss to answer the question whether they lived in people or in natural objects, could only say:-

> "There are so many evil spirits. They are everywhere.
> "But," he reassured his listeners, "the power of God is everywhere also, and God is more powerful than any evil spirit."

(This, it should be noted, is the very same point of confusion which became apparent in the earlier discussion of the popular ideology of "evil" spirits; see Chap.9, pp.304-305).

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[1] Jehu-Appiah 1959:36.

The same uncertainty is acknowledged by the Head-Prophet of the Life and Salvation Church, who, though, on the basis of his Biblical studies, suggests an answer:-

> "As to the origin of demons," he writes[1], "nothing has been revealed. We do know, however, that they are constantly seeking human embodiment or some material form through which they can express themselves and work out their desires.
>
> "One of the most logical theories as to their origin is that these demon spirits are the angelic creatures that were involved in the fall of Lucifer, that glorious creature that grew ambitious in heaven ..... and was cast out."

But if the identification of the Biblical "devils" and "evil spirits" with Fante "witch" spirits is accepted, as it undoubtedly is by the generality of townspeople, and indeed by African church leaders too, the above proposition involves a contradiction of the popularly-held ideology of matrilineally-inherited witchcraft. No other church leaders put forward ideas of this kind, and they remained somewhat marginal even in the one church where they were encountered. Furthermore, the doctrinal questionings of the church leaders are not usually followed in their entirety by the adherents, most of whom, even the regular participants, accept the conventional view of the subject as detailed in Chapter 9.

The area of uncertainty among church leaders is compounded by those who take account, in their explanatory systems, of factors other than "evil spirits". Difficulty seems to arise particularly over the significance in this respect of sin, and sometimes even the answers offered by a single church leader are not wholly consistent. The very Prophet quoted, previously, as attributing sickness to "devils" and "demons", writes in that same article:-

> "It was Satan and his work that brought all the suffering and sorrow into the world. Every sin, all sickness, and death with all its sense of finality are with us because of Satan[2]."

Satan, of course, though usually referred to by this name in the Fante Bible, is always understood as one, the pre-eminent, among the devils and demons.

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[1] Prah, n.d., unpub. ms. (3):3.
[2] ibid:1.

Mention of his name as a cause of sickness does not therefore entirely conflict with the ideology of causation by the so-called "evil spirits". But the Prophet has also been heard to elaborate upon this point, instructing his congregation:-

> "Satan can cause temptation to beset any man, and thus bring sickness."

The pastor at the Musama Church put forward an alternative interpretation:

> "Sickness is caused like this," she explained. "Everybody has a guardian angel, but when we sin he departs from us. This leaves the way open for Satan or a devil."

Such views regarding the results of sin are not necessarily voiced in all the African churches in the town, being indeed most evident among those characterised by a higher level of literacy (among their ministry, at least), and by a stronger emphasis upon Bible-reading. Where they arise, they have not always been easily integrated with the more prominent ideologies affirming the availability of this-worldly remedy for misfortune. This, again, may be seen within the Life and Salvation Church, whose Prophet, sometimes warning his adherents that sin can bring about sickness, also advises them:-

> "People are not delivered because they are good, but because they exercise faith in the provisions for healing[1]."

The latter theme is frequently developed in his preaching, as on the occasion when he admonished:

> "Some of the patients at this church do not really have faith in God, but put their faith in medicines. People seeking treatment in hospital do not realise that their efforts are futile without faith in the healing power of Jesus Christ. They must realise that this will prevent their recovery, and they must have faith and patience."

Affirmation of faith, as the necessary prerequisite for healing, is a principle typical of all the African churches in the town. This fact, together with the ambiguity which in these groups has been seen to surround the notion

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[1] Prah, n.d., unpub. ms. (3):11.

of sin, might promote a conclusion that moral issues are regarded as of little consequence. That opinion would, however, be unjustified. All prophets and pastors are accustomed to give moral advice, some in general terms during their public preaching, others privately at individual consultations. They further recognise that a solution should be found to any social discords which might have provoked misfortunes and witchcraft accusations, so that appeals for healing may meet with success. Whether that patient proves to be him- or herself a witch, or whether he has provoked an attack by his own behaviour, a connection with "sin" is apparent. Although the African churches have not emphasised and developed the notion of sin in their cosmologies, the idea is existent among them. Previous studies of witchcraft in Africa, it should be remembered, have drawn attention - implicitly or otherwise - to the connection between witchcraft ideologies and the moral order of the communities in which they occur[1]. The cosmologies of these African churches are of a not dissimilar order.

4. Financial Returns in African Churches: In spite of the differences in ideology and preoccupation shown to occur among the African churches in the town, these churches continue to hold in common their fundamental objective of averting misfortune - most pertinently, sickness - caused by "evil" or "witch" spirits. By this, they have won for themselves a significant place within contemporary local culture, as will be discussed below (pp.327-328). Before this, though, it will be useful to mention in passing the financial return which they receive for their work.

In all these churches, as illustrated previously (see Chap.6, pp.193-194; 196-198), participants are expected to present an offering (afɔrba; in some contexts translated as "sacrifice") during each service. Some African churches, like all Establishment ones, additionally take a collection (tow: "contribution"). At one large and reputedly very prosperous church, the collection is solicited twice over, and not infrequently followed by some

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[1] e.g. see Evans-Pritchard 1937:100-103,107,109-114; Gluckman 1955:92-95; Lewis 1966:319.

special appeal to meet particular expenses. There, on one occasion, the Prophet reprimanded the congregation for giving too little:-

> "Some people are only giving pennies," he said. "Pennies are of no use to God. Our account is for 200 cedis and pennies will not help. Some of you come here only to dance. You must give shillings or two shillings. God will not do anything for you for pennies."

Special appeals are sometimes issued by other churches, but this degree of importunity is something of an exception. At another church, the claim of one blind old lady, that she had nothing she could give to God except a song, was accepted happily. Generally, quite small sums are tendered at these regular collections, usually either 5 or 10 pesewas, and in Low Town often only 2½ pesewas (10 pesewas, still sometimes called a "shilling", equalled approximately 3½ new pence in 1973). In most cases, therefore, taking also into account the relatively small congregations, the collections are unlikely to result in any very great profit.

A more significant part of the African churches' income probably derives from the thank offerings given by beneficiaries. In many churches, when a particular request is first presented, it is customary for a specific sum to be promised, and this is rendered after the desire has been met. The precise sums of money which change hands are often kept confidential, but they are undoubtedly of a different order from those given in the regular church collections. At one church in the town, where most of the congregation were very ordinarily circumstanced, it appeared that the most common amount promised in return for a special request was ¢20 (£6-67; 1973), which might for some have been nearly 3 weeks' earnings. Some supplicants gave less; others gave considerably more.

An accusation is sometimes heard in Ghana to the effect that the African church leaders are primarily interested in money-making. Probably there is no simple answer to this charge. The prophets themselves deny it, drawing attention to the small amount of their regular church collections, and affirming that they demand no payment for their work. Their beneficiaries, they say, make their thank-offerings entirely as free gifts. Thus the

invitation quoted above (p.317) to:-

> "Approach Prophet Prah's Ministry for help without charge, but promise and offerings."

Nevertheless, the return from promise and offering can be substantial. Not always, however, do the large sums involved go to the gain of the prophets and pastors actually working locally, for church members with a particularly urgent request will often choose to travel to the national headquarters of their organisation, to consult their head-prophet. Non-church-members may do likewise, or alternatively prefer a recommended prophet in another town. Moreover, out of the income which the churches collect locally, most appear to be required to forward a sizeable proportion on to headquarters. Of the remainder, many of the local prophets claim to spend the greater part in developing the amenities of their churches, rather than upon themselves.

One local church out-station has developed a formula which deals neatly with some of these dilemmas, for members presenting thank-offerings make announcements as:-

> "Nothing bad happened to me this week, so here is 20 pesewas for God and 40 pesewas for the pastors."

These sums, however, generally offered in acknowledgement of quite every-day happenings, are mostly small, and can scarcely produce much revenue.

On the other hand, the Prophet of another out-station, who claims to draw not at all upon church funds for his personal use, and says that he himself lives upon the profits of his own coconut-plantation, acquires all his farm labour from his beneficiaries. Each of these reputedly contracts for 3 days' work, contributed at either planting or harvest-time. The enterprise produces sufficient return for a balance, over and above the Prophet's living expenses, to be available for construction work at the church. Any monetary thank-offerings from wealthier clients are apparently used for this same purpose.

Most of the local prophets and pastors share the ambition to improve their church premises, but while many live fairly comfortably by local standards, few live ostentatiously. To conclude, therefore, it may be said that if any enormous profits are realised within the African churches in Saltpond, they probably go more to the benefit of the national headquarters than of the local branches. But it is also true that informed local opinion draws distinctions between some prophets, whom it sees as wholly concerned with healing or the welfare of their churches, and others whom it regards as primarily interested in making private profit. Respect is apportioned accordingly.

5. African Churches and "Traditional" Nature-god Cults in Contemporary Culture. The gains, whether moderate or substantial, which have been shown to be realisable by African church functionaries, cannot in themselves account for the place which these organisations have been winning within the local culture. This can only be explained by advantages believed to accrue to the churches' followers.

In this connection it is perhaps suggestive that the major period of growth of African churches in the town, from about 1953 to 1964 (c.f. Chap.9, p.290), was broadly contemporaneous with the demise, nationally, of the so-called "drinking-medicine" cults such as Tigare (or, locally, "Power"; see Chap.7, pp.233-234). These latter cults, which according to some observers of the period had been superseding the "traditional" Akan cults of nature-deities during the 1940s and early 1950s[1], became for a time one of the most popular agencies for the identification of witches, and the countering of witchcraft[2]. As previous paragraphs have indicated, these are precisely the activities which most engage the attention of the African churches today. It is reasonable to conclude that the "drinking-medicine" cults have, in their turn, been displaced by the African Christian churches, a result which

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[1] Christensen 1954b:396; 1959:271,275-276,277-278; Field 1948:172-173.
[2] Christensen 1954b:396-398; 1959:276; Debrunner 1959:106-108,110,116-117.

was indeed forecast by some earlier commentators[1].

The "drinking-medicine" cults in the Saltpond area have, by the 1970s, entirely disappeared, but the indigenous cults of the nature-deities, which they might once have seemed to threaten, have outlived them. Attenuated though the nature-god cults have been shown to be (see Chap. 7, pp.230-231; Chap.8, pp.258-259), they are still, in the 1970s, in keen and direct competition with the African churches. This is the probable reason for the vehement condemnation of such cults which is so especially typical of African church preaching (see Chap.7, pp.219-220).

The African churches have in recent years been enjoying successes which are acknowledged widely throughout Ghana, and which are causing some concern among Establishment church leaders. The contention here is that their appeal lies primarily in the anti-witchcraft activity that underlies their explicit objective of healing. This meets the needs of members of a culture where witchcraft is regarded as the most likely cause of misfortune. These are needs for which the Establishment churches make inadequate provision, and which seem to be most particularly felt by women. Reasons for the continuing concern with witchcraft should be sought in the present-day, changing state of social organisation. Possible explanations for the increasing recognition being accorded to the Christian God as a force capable of intervening in human affairs will be considered in the subsequent and final chapter (p.334).

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[1] Debrunner 1959:154,160.

Chapter 11. CONCLUSION: RELIGIOUS SYMBOLISM IN A CHANGING SOCIETY.

1. "Modern" and "Traditional" Religion in Saltpond. This study opened by posing two questions regarding cosmological outlook in the Fante town of Upper Saltpond. Firstly, why have "modern" and universalistic faiths, Christianity in particular, achieved so notable a success? And secondly, why do "traditional" belief and ritual persist alongside the newly accepted religion? Some answers to these questions have been sought in terms of the interaction of groups and individuals in the community.

Thus an account was given of the politicoeconomic organisation of Saltpond. The economic base of the community was first looked at, with particular attention to the changes in social organisation brought about by school education and the combined effects of in-migration and out-migration. It was found that occupational structure has altered in response to forces working on a national or even international scale. Moreover, a "modern" system of social stratification is apparent, the upper level of which is recruited on the basis of education, occupation and income. This may be regarded as an incipient "class" system, although "class consciousness" is lacking.

"Traditional" principles of social stratification, while taking personal achievement into account, channel advancement through a system defined by kinship affiliation and age. This is quite distinct from the emerging "class" stratification, but the two systems partially overlap because of the importance of income within each.

The father-son relationship, always important in Fante culture, has become more significant, yet, contrary to some reports, descent in this society may be typified as matrilineal. Matrilineal kinship, moreover, has retained a real significance under contemporary conditions. This is apparent even though matrilineal groups are losing cohesiveness and are now cross-cut by the emerging class differences.

The "traditional" political community may be regarded, from one point of view, as a collection of matrilineal descent groups. Thus kinship provides the articulating principle at the lower level. The upper level is defined on the basis of territoriality. The matrilineal groups acknowledge between themselves that their lands form a contiguous territory over which the collective authority of their respective leaders holds sway. One among their number represents this authority in his own person, but apparently does not transmit this right automatically to his matrilineal heirs.

From a second viewpoint, the "traditional" political community may be seen as a body of menfolk who stand united in spite of their diverse matrilineal affiliations. They achieve this solidarity, supposedly, by their common membership of the "military" asafo company, which is recruited from father to son. Ideology insists that the company musters the men of the community, but this is known to be a fiction. Marriage outside the town is not uncommon, and thus only a proportion of men whose matrilineages are based in Upper Saltpond have rights of membership in the local asafo company.

Ultimate political power has long been lost from the "traditional" system to "modern" central government, and changing economic conditions have brought about an increasing number of local residents who are not personally involved in the "traditional" organisation. Nevertheless, "traditional" structures still perform functions of a political - if attenuated - character. The continuing significance of these "traditional" institutions can be related to differential allocation of resources, particularly of land.

Christianity made its first impression on those Fante who attended schools run by the British trading companies, and who became involved in the newly emerging prestigious occupational system based upon paid employment. But this new religion made no real advance among the Fante until there had been a deliberate subversion by colonial administration and church of the only indigenous cult with any significance above local level. A historical treatment of the growth of Christianity in Saltpond itself brought out

connections between denominationalism and factionalism in the town at various levels. Denominationalism is also apparently connected with extensions of literacy among the populace, and in some cases with the arrival in the town of in-migrants of previously unrepresented ethnic groupings.

The many Christian churches in the town were classified, by doctrinal differences, into three types: Establishment, Fundamentalist and African. Congregations in churches of different types were examined for differences in social composition. Here it became necessary to stress the distinction between "active" and "professed" church membership. Churches of particular types, and sometimes even particular churches, were shown to unite members of interest groups based on factors such as class, ethnic origin or sex. In addition, certain consistencies were apparent between the ideologies of churches of different types, and important concerns of their members.

For instance, in Establishment churches, the "active" male members are predominantly men whose class status is, in the terms of the local community, high. Female members are largely the wives and daughters of these men. Churches of this type expect their adherents to follow the rule of monogamy, favour a more companionate form of marriage, and insist upon the man's duty to provide for his wife and children after his death. Practices of this kind undermine to some extent the bonds of individuals to their matrilineage. On the other hand, they are in keeping with interests relevant to the individual in the context of his class status. Most particularly, they help him to pass the privileges which he has himself acquired on to his own children.

In contrast, African church congregations, which are predominantly female, are typically made up of persons whose class status is relatively low. The evidence offered by one somewhat exceptional church of this type suggests that these women are drawn to the African churches by a need for the "protection" which is supposedly available through them. The dangers which they fear are thought to derive from witchcraft, a force which manifests itself mainly within the matrilineage. Women in these churches are - if native to Saltpond -

largely those whose involvement with their own matrilineages persists in more or less the "traditional" manner. Often divorcees, wives of absentee husbands, or perhaps polygynous wives, most of them live in lineage-owned houses together with other matrikin. They are therefore immediately affected by tensions within the group. Since women are in addition in a severely disadvantaged position, relative to men, in the fields of education and employment, it is almost predictable that they should be especially preoccupied with the problem of witchcraft. The African churches meet their needs admirably.

The asafo company, the communal form of the "traditional" local deity or nature-god cult, also unites members of a specific interest group. Asafo members are invariably native-born Saltpond men whose class status is low. They do not belong to any of the Christian churches. Receiving no great benefit from the "modern" system of social status which transcends locality, they are scarcely inconsistent in retaining membership in an organisation whose ideology and ritual assert vigorously - if fictitiously - the solidarity of the local community.

The asafo officers, on the other hand, are differently circumstanced, since they are typically nowadays men of relatively high class status. Accordingly, they are in most cases "active" or at least "professed" members of an Establishment church. Their attachment to the asafo company involves them in ritual activity which their churches discountenance as pagan. This ritual, however, carries implications for the politics of the local community, and is regarded as essential by even the most committedly Christian of the officers. An accommodation between these positions has taken place through which, by the qualification of teaching in certain churches and by moderation of practice in the individuals concerned, "active" members of Establishment churches are left free to participate in asafo affairs.

The priestesses who are attached to the asafo companies also maintain cults of their own. In this role of private consultant, they are approached by individuals in time of personal need. This practice finds its parallel in the context of Christianity within the African churches, whose prophets

and prophetesses likewise provide for individual supplicants. (These latter contract a relationship with the church which is "afflictive" rather than "protective"; thus they do not normally remain in the organisation permanently as "active" members.) The services offered by priestesses and prophets allow direct alternatives to those believing themselves troubled by witchcraft.

Different individuals choose differently between the two agencies. Decisions appear to be made on largely empirical grounds, but there is now a discernible tendency in favour of supplication through an African Christian church. This is most evident among persons of high class status, who most likely are Establishment church members. Informants like these maintain that, wherever the personal power of a prophet and priestess are equal, the spiritual forces accessible through a prophet carry the greater weight. Thus the Supreme Being - the Christian God, identified by Christian and non-Christian alike with the "traditional" High God Nyame - is now to an extent recognised as a more effective force than local deities in governing human lives.

But the variation which is acknowledged in practitioners' personal powers is also judged by more general criteria. The significant factor in this context is not whether the practitioner is prophet or priestess. His or her supposed efficacy, or lack of it, derives from his reputation as himself possessing - or not possessing - the power of witchcraft. In order to detect and counteract a witch, the practitioner needs himself or herself to be a witch.

Witchcraft beliefs are still universally accepted by the people of Saltpond, quite irrespective of their class status or their formal religious attachment. The early Christian missionaries' identification of the Fante "witch" with the Biblical "devil" or "evil spirit" effectively licenses members of churches of all types to retain beliefs of this kind. It also provides a charter for the anti-witchcraft activities of the African churches, and offers justification to Establishment church members who on occasion - encountering only non-manipulative Christianity in their own organisations - seek practical help from churches of other types.

2. Religious Symbolism and Social Cleavages in a Changing Community.

The preceding section, in examining the cosmology prevailing in Upper Saltpond at a time of marked structural change, has found this cosmology to hold decided internal contradictions. The question must now be asked why anomalies of this nature are accepted by the townspeople in the face of all apparent logic. An answer can be found by considering the broad range of religious belief and organisation in the light of cleavages of different kinds within the population. The cleavages shown to be important by this study are three in number, namely, those of ethnic origin, class and sex.

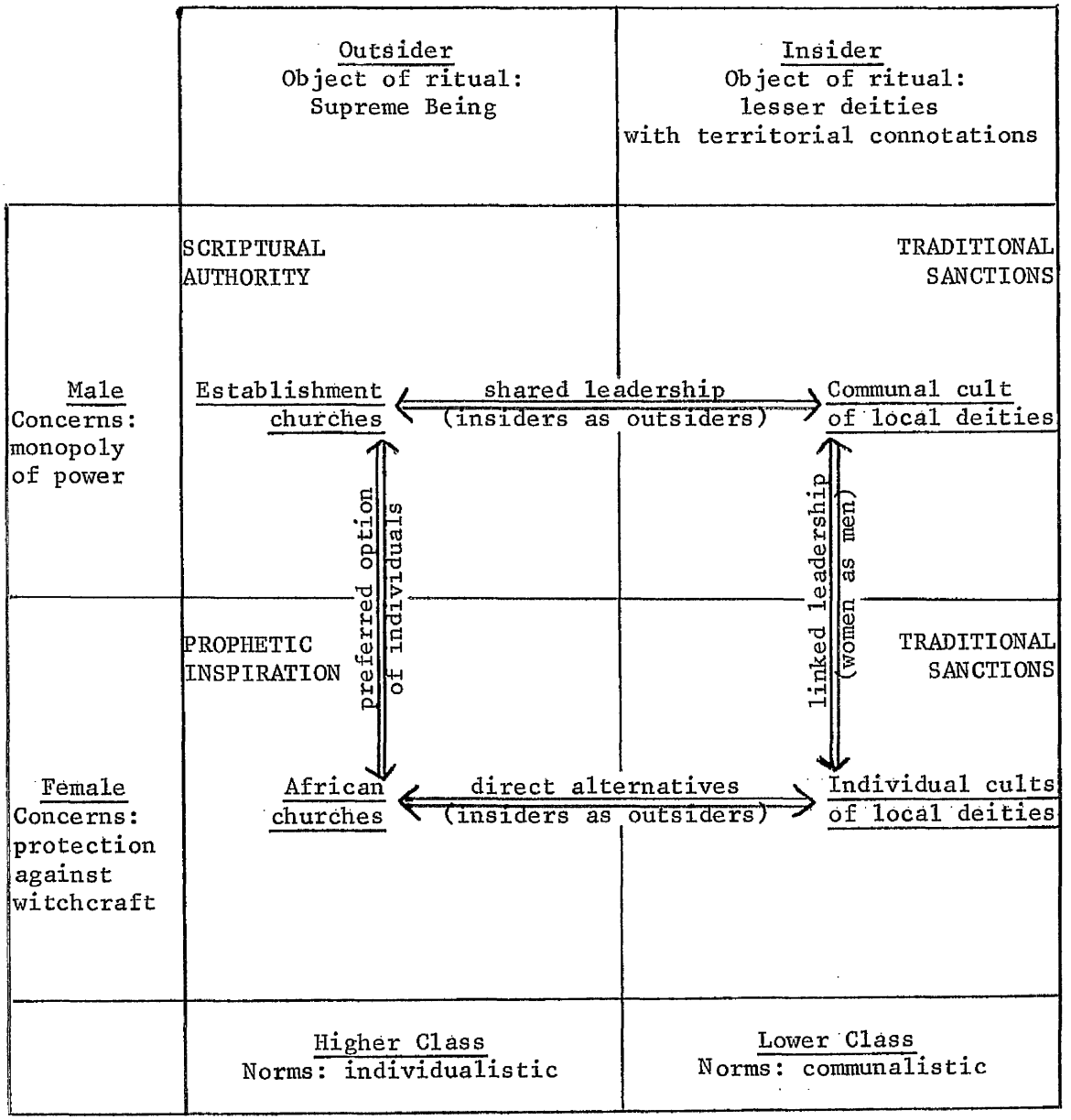
To simplify matters, each of these will be taken as two-dimensional. Thus in conjunction with the opposition male : female, there may be used the oppositions lower class : higher class and insider : outsider. Fig.11.1 (p.335) shows how these are reflected in religious organisation, both "traditional" and "modern". ("Modern" religious groups are also reduced to the two most contrasting types.) Cleavages of class and origin, it may be noted, are positioned along the same axis. Since individuals who advance in class status become, by this very fact, partial outsiders to their natal groups, this arrangement is not inappropriate.

As Fig.11.1 illustrates, the cosmology and cult organisation provide an idiom expressing changing social conditions. There is a basic division of the male sphere from the female sphere, and of the domain of the outsider from that of the insider. The insider addresses his ritual to "traditional" local deities, the outsider to the Supreme Being - in this instance, the Christian God. This, incidentally, is consistent with part of the findings of Robin Horton, who, in his treatment of African conversion, has argued that an increasing concern with the Supreme Being is characteristic among those who:

> "become involved in social life beyond the confines of their various microcosms. [1]."

[1] Horton 1971:102; see also Horton 1975:219-235,373-397.

Fig.11.1. Religious symbolism and social cleavage in Upper Saltpond.



All ritual organisation in the male sphere allows for the pursuit of the men's paramount interest as men, namely, the perpetuation of male dominance. However, insider-males are attached to different ritual groups according to their class status. While lower-class men belong to the "traditional" local deity cult, in its communal form, higher-class men join the Establishment churches where they associate with outsiders. For insider-males, local deity cult and Establishment church stand as direct alternatives. Since both are recruited patrifilially, a man belongs to either one or the other. Individuals are detached from the "traditional" cult by the same mechanisms as those through which they advance their class status, thus principally through education. Education, then, has deflected individuals from the communal men's cult to the Establishment church, either in the present generation or one previous. These latter men act as outsiders, but none the less insiders they remain. Hence the connection between the two opposed domains which arises in their shared leadership, a leadership identical not just in the class status of those involved but in the very individuals concerned.

The dominant preoccupation of the women is to protect themselves against witchcraft, and this is catered for in their own ritual organisation. Both the individual local deity cults and the African Christian churches operate to this express purpose, acting indeed as direct alternatives to each other. Both find their clientele or congregations among the women, and both provide leadership opportunities for women in whole or in major part. Class cleavages exert their influence in the female sphere, as in the male, but here their effect is less direct. Women cannot yet improve their class status by their own efforts. Thus in Establishment churches, women secure admission essentially as the daughters and wives of menfolk; only in the African churches do they find a realm of Christianity which is indisputably their own. These churches have a class base, certainly, but they are no province for any privileged group. Rather, they provide for lower-class women who hold aspirations of advancement. In attaching themselves to an African church, lower-class

insider-women find a way to act as outsiders. But they, too, remain insiders all the while. Hence the readiness of individuals to seek assistance from either prophetess or priestess, not according to unchanging conviction but depending on circumstances at the time.

Male ritual organisation, it will be recalled, helps men to monopolise positions of power and leadership within the community. This prompts the question whether the intense concern of women with "protection", together with the ritual organisation built upon it, represents an attempt to resist male domination. On this basis, witchcraft - the cause to which they attribute their difficulties - would be in effect an idiom expressing the tensions between women and men. Witchcraft ideology is not given this interpretation by townspeople, who connect it instead to conflict within the matrilineage. Nevertheless, re-examination of case studies brings out this significance in some instances. Case 33 (p.293) depicts a deliberate attempt by women to resist domination by a matrikinsman within a largely "traditional" context. Likewise Case 36 (p.298) illustrates tensions which may occur in a "modern" context, between women and male lineage members who advance in class status.

Witchcraft attacks are believed usually to be motivated by envy of persons in more fortunate circumstances. Thus witchcraft, although condemned by lineage norms, acts in part to reinforce these norms. Its potential victims are those who excessively pursue their own interests, neglecting their "traditional" duty to share their gains with other lineage members. As Evans-Pritchard has implied[1], there is a sense in which the victim of an attack indeed deserves his fate. But the paradox in the Saltpond case is that whereas the most likely apparent victims are male, those most commonly afflicted are female. Men undermine the cohesiveness of the lineage by their strivings for self-advancement, and create a climate wherein witchcraft cases increase. The women suffer.

There is a possible explanation for this. Witchcraft arises in the context of kinship, within the domain of the insider. But men escape more

1 Evans-Pritchard 1937:105,109,116-117.

easily into the domain of the outsider; even lower-class men achieve this to an extent by virtue of their wage employment. The more fully they live in the world of the outsider, it may be, the less vulnerable they are to witchcraft attacks. (Witchcraft has been found by Michael Banton[1] to lose its power to harm migrants who have lefthome areas for Freetown, Sierra Leone, though more concerted attention must be given to this matter before it may be concluded that the effect is general.) Women, on the other hand, are confined to the world of the insider, yet they too aspire for advancement. The knowledge that they themselves long to repudiate the communal norms of kinship may be sufficient reason for them to believe themselves threatened by the witchcraft attacks that in their position they cannot evade.

Thus the urgency to find a remedy in ritual organisation, whether this be in the domain of the insider or of the outsider. In both, treatment includes advice on how to deal with the conflict in which the problem arises. The African churches, which enable women partially to set aside their role of insider, offer one solution; in effect, they support the individual vis-a-vis the matrilineage. Indeed, seriously afflicted persons are detached day and night from their kinship group. It would be illuminating to know if local deity priestesses in their turn operate to buttress the "traditional" norms of kinship, but this the material available does not make plain.

It would not be surprising, though, if women who sought treatment as insiders were influenced to submit to "traditional" norms of behaviour. The cults in the female-insider sphere, though opposed to those in the male-insider sphere, are also linked to them in their leadership. Priestesses, who are accorded official positions in the male cult, instance in some contexts women acting as men. Though free to voice the feelings of the women to the men, they may as readily impose the views of the men upon the women.

Linking between the male and female spheres is also apparent in the domain of the outsider. Here, it arises in the individual initiatives of the higher-class males who, though permanently attached to an Establishment

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[1] Banton 1957:139.

church, treat the African churches as their preferred option when in time of practical need. Since these men temporarily abandon their position of dominance over women for one of subservience, it is tempting to take them for men acting as women, though this is perhaps fanciful. None the less, it is noteworthy that in all the instances where basic structural cleavages are marked by opposed ritual symbols, they are also connected by persons in ambiguous status positions who manipulate symbols of either type.

Thus the contradictions of cosmology mentioned earlier reflect decided contradictions in the social system itself. Men and women need to cooperate, but their interests are diametrically opposed. Members of different economic classes have contradictory interests, but also have need of each other. The Saltpond case, then, supports the view that cosmological systems are integrated not so much by the internal logic of their own elements, as by a logic inherent in the social system.

3. Religious Symbolism and Class Consciousness. The arrangement of the data in Fig.11.1 (p.335) also helps to solve the great problem surrounding class in this community. The question must arise: why, when the structural conditions consistent with a class system are clearly apparent, has class consciousness failed to develop?

Abner Cohen writes[1]:

> "If status divisions will cut across ethnic divisions, then the manifestations of ethnic identity and exclusiveness will tend to be inhibited by the emerging countervailing alignments of power. The less privileged from one ethnic group will cooperate with the less privileged from other ethnic groups against the privileged from the same ethnic group. The privileged groups will, for their part, also close ranks to protect their interests. If the situation continues to develop in this way, tribal differences will be weakened and will eventually disappear .... In time, class division will be so deep that a new sub-culture, with different styles of life, different norms, values and ideologies, will emerge, and a situation may develop which is similar to that of 'the two nations' of Victorian Britain."

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[1] Cohen 1969b:193-194.

However, he continues[1],

> "the situation will be entirely different if the new class cleavages will overlap with tribal groupings, so that within the new system the privileged will tend to be identified with one ethnic group and the under-privileged with another ethnic group. In this situation cultural differences tend to persist, but within the newly emerging social system they will assume new values and new social significance. A great deal of social change will take place, but it will tend to be effected through the rearrangement of traditional cultural items.."

There are indications in the literature that, in certain parts of West Africa where structural conditions are taking the form which Cohen regards as suitable, class sub-cultures are indeed beginning to emerge. These sub-cultures frequently find their expression in terms of religious symbolism. Thus in Ibadan, Nigeria, the Yoruba of low class status, whether indigenous townspeople or immigrants, have mostly adopted Islam. Those of high class status are Christian, and combine in church congregations with privileged members of other ethnic groups[2]. Likewise in Monrovia, Liberia - where the majority of the ethnically diverse population are Christian irrespective of their class status - , the so-called "civilised" sections generally belong to Establishment-type churches, while the Fundamentalist and African churches are the preserve of the lower-class "tribespeople"[3]. In both cases, the higher classes gravitate to churches or cathedrals in the city centre, where congregations are ethnically mixed; the lower classes worship locally.

The Saltpond case represents an intermediate stage. Status divisions certainly cross-cut ethnic divisions, among the men at least (among the women, the two are virtually congruent). Cultural differences have developed which set apart the privileged and the less privileged, but the divisions are blurred, reflecting the position of the higher-class insider male who acts as both insider and outsider. The higher class most particularly have adopted a new culture which they share with outsiders, that is, with the privileged of other ethnic groups. Religious ideology is an important element in this

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[1] Cohen 1969b:194.
[2] Lloyd et al 1967:72-74,111n.2,141,148.
[3] Fraenkel 1964:158-159,171.

culture, and ritual organisation provides the privileged group as a whole with a measure of cohesion.

The indigenous lower class, on the other hand, have not developed a culture which is shared by persons of diverse ethnic origin, but prefer instead the "traditional" culture. Their position suggests that tradition may persist in circumstances over and above those hypothesised by Cohen. Insider lower-class males employ religious symbolism to assert the importance of the locality and the local community, a context where not class but kinship is relevant. Their ideology actively denies that they have interests in common with members of other ethnic groups.

This does not necessarily represent a failure to see where their best interests lie, nor merely a delayed response to changed conditions. These men - economically deprived relative to members of the higher classes - are themselves the beneficiaries when the "traditional" norms of cooperation among kinsmen are observed. Moreover, claims of locality are advanced to central government, often successfully, in the competition for the siting of development projects. Lower-class insider males successfully monopolise the resulting opportunities for industrial employment. In the present circumstances, therefore, their stress upon the exclusiveness of the local community is fully rational. An ideology of class consciousness would work against their interests.

It may be, incidentally, that the Saltpond situation is not so very different from others in West Africa. Part of the apparent contrast may arise from differences in the scope of available data, which is itself the result of differences in the aims of different studies. But beyond this, it is noteworthy that the religious organisations of the lower classes in all the locations mentioned previously have a different character from those of the higher classes. Even though the form of symbolism employed - animist, Christian, or Moslem - may vary, lower-class religious organisations are typically rooted firmly within a particular local group. Thus, even

though a universalistic form of religious ideology may be dictated by (possibly) the conditions of the city, the lower classes are still concerned to assert the importance of their communities. There is a question here which deserves closer investigation.

Saltpond men of high class status are differently circumstanced from their lower-class fellows, for their best prospects of employment or promotion lie outside the town. Claims of birth or residence are less important, for them, than personal achievement and the capacity to cooperate with people of different ethnic backgrounds. Their acceptance of a religious ideology and organisation which transcends local boundaries is therefore as consistent with their own interests as is the rather different ideology and organisation of lower-class men. Moreover, their membership of Establishment-type churches has come to be regarded as an index of their superior class status, in much the same way that it has in Monrovia or Ibadan. The higher class may, like the lower class, lack a genuine class consciousness, but in religious symbolism this undoubtedly finds its germ.

4. Religious Symbolism and the Social Order. Religious symbols both reflect and mediate cleavages of interest within a society as these develop and change. As different kinds of cleavages become important, or as different sections of the society acquire new interests, new ideologies come into being. Alternatively, old symbols are adapted to take on a new significance. But at the same time that religious symbolism expresses the political oppositions within a society, it also mediates between them, providing temporary solutions to continuing contradictions.

A range of "symbolic functions" which can be carried by different "symbolic forms" has been specified by Abner Cohen[1]. Religious belief and practice, as he himself points out, offer a type of symbolic form which is particularly successful in providing for a number of symbolic functions.

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[1] Cohen 1969a:218-220; 1974:26-30,69-84.

The present research has brought to light further empirical data in support of Cohen's assertions. Religious symbolism has been shown to provide a useful basis for defining the membership of interest groups, notably of those which lack any other means to this end. Ritual organisation provides informal groups of this kind with the formal structure they lack. Religious ideologies formulate the changing aspirations and aims of those who come to adhere to them. Altogether, religious symbolism functions - as Cohen remarks of symbolism in general - to objectify the relationships between individuals and groups:-

> "We can observe individuals in concrete reality,"

he writes[1],

> "but the relationships between them are abstractions that can be observed only through symbols ..... We 'see' groups only through their symbolism. Values, norms, rules and abstract concepts like honour, prestige, rank, justice, good and evil are made tangible through symbolism."

However, religious symbolism does more than merely objectify social relationships and social norms. In the words of Clifford Geertz[2]:-

> "The acceptance of authority that underlies the religious perspective that the ritual embodies ... flows from the enactment of the ritual itself. By inducing a set of moods and motivations - an ethos - and by defining an image of cosmic order - a world view - by means of a single set of symbols, the performance makes the model <u>for</u> and the model <u>of</u> aspects of religious belief mere transpositions of one another .....
>
> "The dispositions which religious rituals induce ... have their most important impact - from a human point of view - outside the boundaries of the ritual itself as they reflect back to color the individual's conception of the established world of bare fact."

Thus religious symbolism invests social relationships with its own particular authority. Moreover, where new relationships and new social norms become relevant, and where these cannot be legitimised by existing religious symbols, new sources of ritual authority may be needed to uphold them.

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[1] Cohen 1969a:220; 1974:30
[2] Geertz 1966:35-36.

Thus religion makes its own contribution in the direction of change. Abner Cohen is aware of this significance[1], as also is Geertz, who clarifies the point thus[2]:-

> "A synopsis of social order, a set of religious beliefs, is also a gloss upon the mundane world of social relationships ... It renders them graspable.
> "But more than gloss, such beliefs are also a template. They do not merely interpret social ... processes in cosmic terms ... but they shape them."

It would appear, therefore, that a group does not adopt a set of beliefs merely because they are consistent with its social conditions, but also partly because in so doing it makes a concerted effort to achieve its common aims. This it may do consciously, or more probably unconsciously. Either way, the functions performed by the beliefs concerned stand as in part their cause. It is not entirely true to assert, with Melford Spiro[3], that religion is improperly explained by its "sociological functions", for the function is in some respect antecedent to the assumption of the belief. This, undoubtedly, is not the only explanation of religion, but it is the one which social anthropologists have a particular competence to deal with.

5. Outstanding Questions. There remain a number of unanswered questions at the present time, quite apart from any problems occupying those social anthropologists who follow different theoretical approaches from that adopted here. The present study has, like others which preceded it, shown how forms of religious symbolism vary in accordance with the structural conditions in which they occur. Thus symbolic forms are successful when they are distinctly fitting to their particular structural context. But no explanation is yet forthcoming which wholly accounts for the apparent interchangeability of different symbolic forms. A variety of symbols may have the potentiality to achieve the same ends in a certain setting, and it cannot be said with any certainty why one rather than another should be selected in each case. Whether the answer lies in some undetected quality of the symbol as such,

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[1] Cohen 1974:81.
[2] Geertz 1966:40-41.
[3] Spiro 1966:108,118.

or perhaps in an undetermined feature of its social setting, cannot as yet be decided.

The interesting question as to why religious belief should be made use of at all, rather than some secular ideology, is outside the scope of a work of the present kind. Here the overriding question is as follows. Granted that a new kind of religion was required by this society in its changed condition, why should it have been Christianity which came to play the part it now does, and not Islam? The two faiths are intrinsically quite similar, and historical circumstance might have allowed either to rise to prominence. Is there then some difference between them, whether in beliefs, values or norms, which renders each faith more suitable to a rather different social setting? If so, this difference needs to be elucidated, along with the precise structural conditions befitting to each. On the other hand, the two faiths may indeed be interchangeable, and the outcome may be determined quite differently. Factors which may for instance be critical could include the identity and character of the group introducing the new religion, the nature of the relations between this group and the indigenous population, and the extent to which the new religion becomes integrated with "modern" economic and administrative organisation.

A more comprehensive body of material than currently available is in fact much needed. Field studies should be undertaken which deal with both religions in their differing forms, and as they impinge upon different sections of the population. These studies should in particular take account of variations in the class status of adherents to the two faiths. West Africa alone clearly offers a wide range of data. Progress might be made simply from a comparative study of orthodox and Ahmadiyya Moslems in a town like Saltpond itself. Alternatively, researches would be useful which enabled proper comparison of Christians and Moslems in, say, Freetown, Sierra Leone, with their fellows in, for instance, Ibadan, Nigeria. Ultimately, the differential impact of the two faiths in the southern and northern parts of

this region would need to be explored.

Additional studies of the place of "traditional" religion under "modern" conditions might also be productive. The present work has suggested that "traditional" religion can in some circumstances provide the lower economic classes with an appropriate ideology. It would be interesting to know, with respect to Saltpond as such, what would have been the results of the analysis had not the research been confined to the cults of local deities, thus excluding cults of lineage ancestors. Locality cults such as those dealt with here would seem likely, in spite of their current vigour, eventually to fall into disuse. Ancestor cults, on the other hand, may perhaps prove more resistant in the face of change. Research which could establish either of the propositions, and which could explain the reasons why, would be most helpful. It might indeed lead to an understanding of precisely what it is in religious symbolism, or in the social setting in which it operates, that causes some symbols to be abandoned and others to be adapted to new circumstances.

These, then, are the kind of questions which need to be investigated if the theory of religious symbolism is to be refined further.

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